ALIENS ★ THE THING!

#106

DARKMAN MOVIE WRITER
CHUCK PFARRER
COMES TO COMICS!

FROM ALIENS TO
THE THING
JOHN ARCUDI
STEPS OUT FROM
BEHIND THE MASK!

SPOTLIGHT ON
SKULL & BONES BY
ED HANNIGAN

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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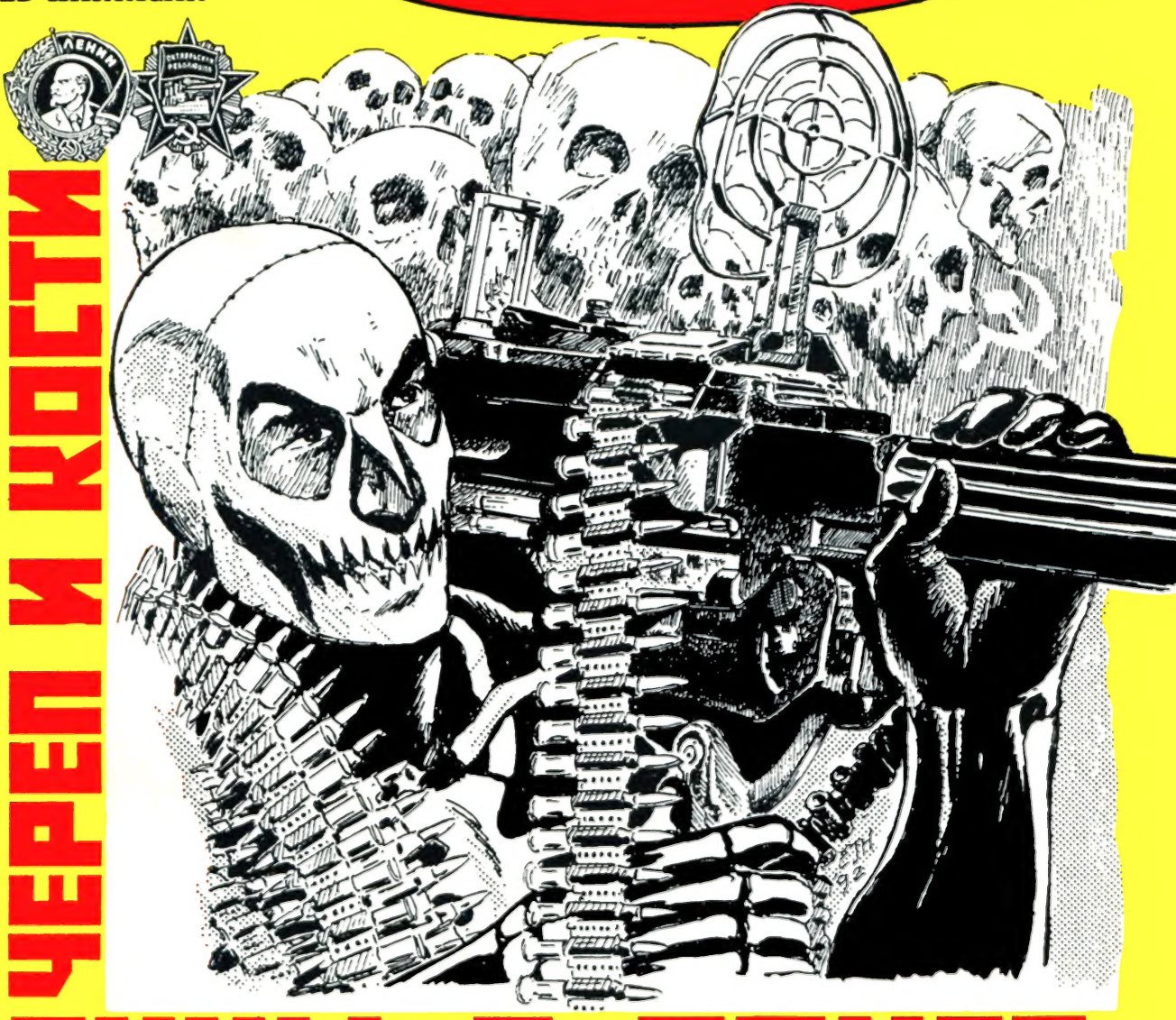

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SKULL & BONES

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CREDITS

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COMICS INTERVIEW

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
editor/publisher

conceived by
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant

DARREL L BOATZ
CHARLES S NOVINSKIE
associate editors

PAUL POWER
contributing editor

MACHINE-WOLF GRAPHICS
art & type direction

DON MARKSTEIN
typographer

TIMOTHY BOYER
SALLY GARLAND
D HAMILTON
Y A QUAN
production

PAUL BARTON
LEROY S BAVS
DOUGLAS ARNOLD EDWARDS
DEREK ERICKSON
PETER FISICO
ERICK A FLINT
CHARLES A GARRETT
NEIL HODGE
PATRICIA JERES
FIONA JEROME
ED O'NEAL
NEIL OTTENSTEIN
TERRY PALLOT
LE CLAIR PEARSON
BOBBY RAE
STEVE SAFFEL
ROBERT SAYRE II
STEVEN TICE
PIERRE VILLENEUVE
DELMO WALTERS JR
RENEE WITTERSTAETTER
special thanks

THE PEEPER
barkaroo bones eye

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mane man

ED-HEAD
darkest horse of all

J R MATHER
international marketing director

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cover by:
ED HANNIGAN
pencils & inks
JRM
colors

Art: Jim Salicrup

UP FRONT

In the issues leading up to #100, I asked for responses to a survey about COMICS INTERVIEW magazine. To my delight, a deluge of constructive criticism and creative feedback resulted. A representative selection of those responses appears here:

Do You Like Entire Issues Devoted to a Single Interview or Subject?

Yes, especially like #72 where we see different people on the same project."

"I do and I don't like seeing interviews devoted to one person."

"Yes, I like entire issues devoted to a single interview or subject."

"Single subjects, unless they are 'minor' stars such as an artist just getting 'hot'."

"I don't mind entire issues devoted to one subject, and the frequency that they have been appearing has been just right."

"Devoted issues are great."

"I don't like to see a whole issue devoted to a single subject (variety being the spice of life, etc.) but think that some people do deserve the scope of treatment they receive. In the case of people like **Neal Adams**, if you are going to run an interview of that length I see no reason to have quite so many illustrations, allowing room for a second interview."

"I'm satisfied with the mix of theme issues and multiple-subject issues but prefer longer, more in-depth interviews (though continue to include the terrific art!)."

"Even though they might seem a waste if you are not really interested in the subject at hand, a good in-depth interview or set of interviews covering a subject is good at times."

"Theme issues are OK if balanced out by variety issues. I much prefer an entire issue devoted to a single subject with multiple interviews over one long interview."

"I like single-interview or theme/subject issues."

"Only with *top* talent or dealing with important issues."

"I enjoy seeing an entire issue on a subject as long as it is pertinent info."

Next: ***Shorter Interviews with More Per Issue — or Fewer Subjects but Longer Interviews?***

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL:
UP FRONT
a rap with *the dak* of daks
3

SPOTLIGHT:
SKULL & BONES
writer/artist *ed hannigan* on his opus & odyssey
4

WRITER:
CHUCK PFARRER
it's a *pfarrer, pfarrer* better *thing . . .*
20

WRITER:
JOHN ARCUDI
from *aliens: genocide* to *the thing* and *the mask*
30

WRITER: **TAD PIETRZYKOWSKI**
we go "down under" to talk to the creator of australia's *dark nebula*
38

LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD
fuel for thought, indeed
54

"He wears a Halloween sort of skeleton costume."

Ed Hannigan has had an illustrious career beginning with his artwork at Marvel in the 70s; PLANET OF THE APES, KULL,

and then working on DEFENDERS, first drawing and then also writing. Other credentials include the artwork on POWERMAN/IRONFIST and BLACK PANTHER. Hannigan also worked in the Marvel editorial department and at one time served as cover editor at DC. At DC, Hannigan also worked on a diversity of projects from ATARI FORCE to LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT. In fact, Ed Hannigan did the artwork for the first five issues of LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT, which was DC's biggest selling title in 1989.

CHARLES S. NOVINSKIE: *You currently have a new book, SKULL & BONES, out from DC. Fill us in a little about the character.*

ED HANNIGAN: That is the name of the book but it's *not* the name of the character. The third issue will explain the title of the book. The character doesn't really have a name but he wears a skeleton costume. He wears a Halloween sort of skeleton costume, all black with white bones. It's sort of the superhero version of a skeleton costume; it's more of a wrap-around as opposed to a front and a back skeleton. He is one of three main characters that the book focusses on. He's the costumed character. He's sort of a Batman character, or at least in that mold. I tried to make him like Zorro or the Green Hornet. He has a car but it's a flying car.

CHARLES: *The book is all yours?*

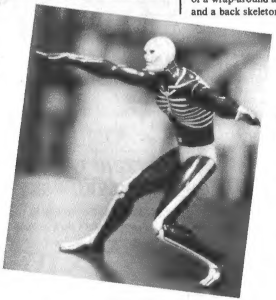
ED: Basically, I'm doing everything on the book; I'm pencilling, inking, and writing it. I also co-designed the book with **Jim Chadwick** so I'm part of the brains behind the project. The book is set in the modern day Soviet Union. The events take place in November of 1990 with the last Revolutionary Day Parade. The story covers a big chunk of Soviet history on which I did massive research. Some parts flash back to World War II and even revolutionary times. There are also flashbacks to the war in Afghanistan but, for the most part, the book takes place in modern Moscow.

CHARLES: *Basically, what you're saying is that the book could be described as a Russian superhero book?*

ED: Sure, or a Russian Batman, if you will.

CHARLES: *The book will be outside of the DC Universe?*

ED: Not really. It's outside of the DC

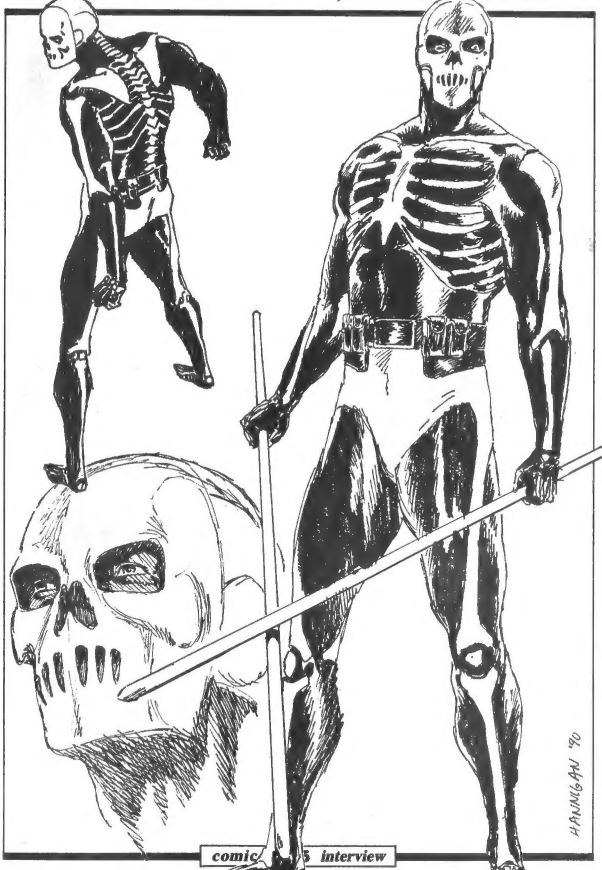


Here are photos of models that Ed made of the skeleton character. Next page: Original character design circa 1990.

SKULL & BONES

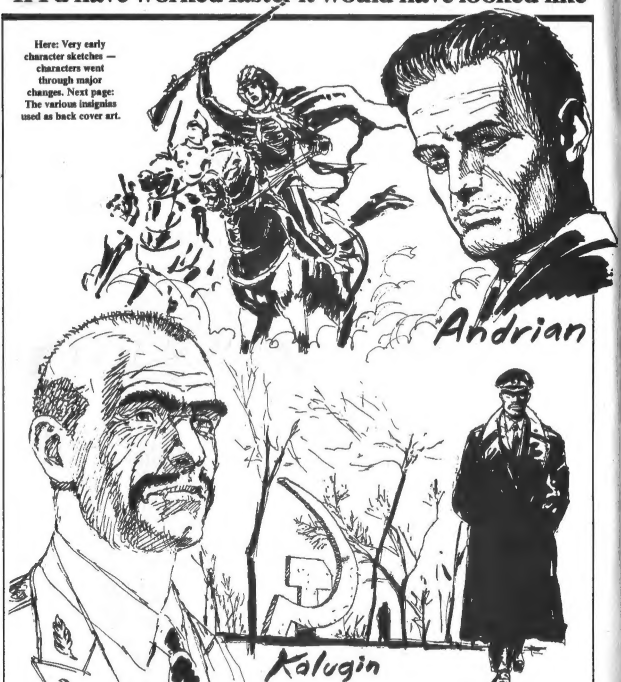
All artwork accompanying this interview ©1991, 1992 Ed Hannigan.

"He's sort of a Batman character, or at least in that mold."



"If I'd have worked faster it would have looked like

Here: Very early character sketches — characters went through major changes. Next page: The various insignias used as back cover art.



Universe in the respect that it's in a foreign country. It's actually set up in my contract that crossovers could take place. It's a lot like **GREEN ARROW**. I wouldn't want the more outrageous super-powered beings in the book because to me that stuff ruins the reality of it. Picture Batman but instead of Gotham City it's Moscow. There are two supporting characters. One is Elektrik Felix, who is the computer hacker sort. He never leaves their headquarters but he's the ringleader, if you will. The other character is Nadejda. There was a discussion as to the proper spelling of "Nadejda." **Arlene Lo,** who is the proofreader for DC, just happens to speak Russian. She called me up and I was floored to find out she spoke Russian! *(Laughter.)* My Russian doesn't sound Russian because I don't know all that much about Russian. In fact, all of the ads have the character's name spelled wrong. It's spelled right in the book, though. Actually, it was my mistake because two letters in Russian look very similar and I switched them one day when I was doing logo designs. Basically the book is about the crumbling of the Russian Empire — all the stuff that's actually happening! If I'd have worked faster it would have looked like I predicted all of the changes going on in

I predicted all of the changes going on in Russia."

Russia. There's a coup in it flashing back to the real coup in Russia. Anyone that's been studying Russia as intently as I have could have seen it coming. I wasn't taken by surprise by the coup, I was just surprised by the speed at which it happened. The superhero character of the book is an Afghanistan veteran that comes back to Moscow slightly twisted because of his experience in Afghanistan. His goal is to break up the government and the way he does that is break into the Kremlin and wire it with explosives. He plans to blow up the Kremlin during the Revolutionary Day Parade in front of a TV audience. Basically the Kremlin will be destroyed in front of a worldwide audience. All of the dignitaries watching from Lenin's mausoleum will be killed. His friend, Elektrik Felix, talks him out of it and they set about other ways to destroy the government. Intertwined in the story is the origin of the character and other subplots.

CHARLES: *I assume that this book is a limited series type of book?*

ED: Right, a three-issue, prestige limited series. I would like to see the book go on to a regular series but the advance sales don't look strong enough.

CHARLES: *Do you feel there is a reason for the low advance sales?*

ED: Sure, I think it has a lot to do with the recession, the Marvel price rise, and the collector mania. I've really labored hard on this project and did a lot of research so obviously I'd like to see sales high enough to warrant SKULL & BONES becoming a regular series. I talked to Soviet citizens and even hired a consultant. I actually spent the development fee on *development* whereas most creators just put it in their wallets. It's been years in the making and I'd hate to see it just disappear.

CHARLES: *How long have you been researching the title?*

ED: I first got the glimmer of an idea about two and a half years ago when I was working on DARK KNIGHT and we were in the process of moving from Manhattan to New Hampshire. It was a

КГБ СССР

"Suffering and death are certainly themes in the book."

radical change, moving to New Hampshire from Manhattan. We bought a house in the country and had a baby, we sort of did it all that year. I had wanted to do something with a character in a skeleton costume for a long time; like back when I was just reading comics before I got into the industry. There were a few books that came to mind, like **Joe Kubert's** ENEMY ACE, the one **Neal Adams** drew. I liked the skeleton figure. Every once in a while I see a book or something that has a skeleton costume in it.

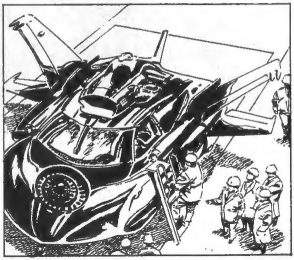
CHARLES: *So what you're saying is that you have this weird skeleton fixation.* (Laughter.)

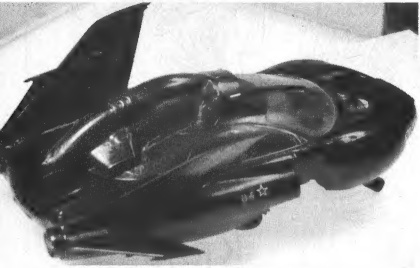
ED: Yeah, exactly, I just think it looks so cool. The problem is that I never knew how hard it would be to draw. *(Laughter.)* I wish I would have picked something easier to draw. I actually went out and bought one of these plastic models to get a three-dimensional look to model my drawings. It was actually a Silver Surfer model that I painted a skeleton figure on. It helped me get all of the visuals the way I wanted. I also purchased and altered a model as a guide for my flying car. There's nothing particularly Russian about the motif except that the Russians think a lot about death. Americans hardly ever think about death. Most Americans are convinced that they won't die. Mass death seems to be a Russian way of life. It's a part of their history. Suffering and death are certainly themes in the book. Death and suffering are tough themes to work effectively into a comic. Especially in these days when Freddie Krueger is so commonplace. The thing about the book is that I didn't want to make the character into a Wolverine type. He will kill someone but he doesn't slaughter people. He's an ex-soldier and he's already seen enough death. When he sets the charges to blow up the Kremlin he rationalizes it all by thinking about the fact that all the people going to be killed are KGB and that they deserve it. I'm anxious to see reader reaction. I think it's a great story but I'm so close to it that it will probably be a year or so before I can read it with much objectivity.

CHARLES: *Getting back to your comment about collector mentality and the consumer's need to buy multiple covers, holograms, that sort of stuff, how do you feel about that?*

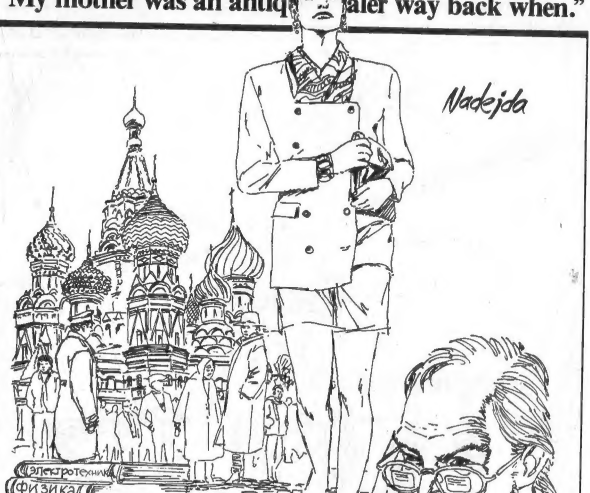
ED: Well, it's all of the stuff people are starting to bitch about. Occasionally **David Kraft** sends me the stuff from Westfield, the subscription service. **K.C. Karlson** has been doing great editorials about that type of material. When I did my interview with DAK (in CI #80) for the LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT I was benefitting from the collector mentality. Even then I was bitching about it. It's not only the stuff that the companies do. You can't blame the companies, hell, they have to do it. If DC doesn't do it then they're fighting the

An a/b comparison of the flying car. Ed assembled the model from various kits — truly an original.





"My mother was an antiq aler way back when."



giant juggernaut of Marvel Comics. They have to do whatever they can do. You can't blame the stores or the retailers either. It's hard to find out who to blame. I think everybody is to blame. I think the readers are to blame to an extent because you can't even call them readers anymore. It's not the hobby of "I like to read comics so I buy comics;" it's the hobby of "I buy comics because I'm investing in comics." The problem with that is that they're not. My mother was an antique dealer and she knew the scam way back when. It's like Franklin Mint, like Hummel figurines. It's like they've identified a market and they're going to pump the market. If they can produce 20 Wolverine books a month they'll do it. And it gets to the point where a Wolverine book is another book in disguise. The book no longer has meaning, he's no longer unique. My feeling about my book is that it may be better than one of those books, then again it may not. My feeling is that it's definitely different from those books. If I was a kid again and had money to spend on comics I would buy a whole variety of comics. I wouldn't buy five of the same comic. Then again, maybe I don't know because I'm not a collector.

CHARLES: *And I think there is a flaw in the collector mentality. You can say that you've invested in Golden Age and even Silver Age books because of their scarcity, but to say you've invested in a book that has several million copies circulating seems like flawed thinking.*

ED: Exactly. Who's going to buy it fron you? It's like everyone that wants a copy already has one. Everyone's a seller and no one's a buyer.

"The distributors' power is they decide what to recom-

mend to stores. A lot of alternatives never get promoted."

CHARLES: *If you want to truly invest you need to find that one book that has a low print run but might be in huge demand. Hey, maybe readers should invest in SKULL & BONES.*

ED: Yeah, that's a good idea — although it won't do me a whole hell of a lot of good. You know, I'll get my fifty copies and give most of them away. I really don't look at comics as an investment. I'll tell you comics are a lousy investment. If you want to invest in something you should . . .

CHARLES: *Invest in Marvel stock.* (Laughter.)

ED: Right, no kidding! Actually comics are a lousy investment because they deteriorate and disintegrate no matter how you store them. Also, they're tough to move around and take up a lot of space. I've heard that baseball cards are the same way. You know, when I was a kid I collected baseball cards because I was a kid, but now I have no interest in them. I grew up in Massachusetts so I followed the Red Sox and you collected your favorite players.

CHARLES: *I think a good example of this collector frenzy would be a company such as Impel who went from basically the bottom of the list to being something like the third leading producer of collector cards.*

ED: As a businessman I'm not really the top of the stack. I think of what I would like to do — what I would think would be neat. I don't necessarily consider the profitability of it. I think there are a lot of factors determining today's market. First, the distributors have a lot of power but they have to respond to what the companies are producing. They also have to respond to the consumers. The power of the distributors lies in the fact that they decide what to recommend to the stores. There is a lot of alternative stuff that never gets promoted. Kids aren't really interested in the alternate stuff. Of course, how can they get interested if they never see the stuff to begin with?

CHARLES: *Distributors placed fairly high on the "Power 100" listing in issue #100 of COMICS INTERVIEW.*

ED: I wrote a letter about the 100 thing. Which I liked, but let's face it, it was a marketing gimmick. When I saw **Cat Yronwode's** letter I thought, "Look, it's just a way to look at things, what's the big deal?" It's not *my* way to look at it but it *is* a way to look at the industry. The way I looked at it was that you got to read a capsule version of a hundred people in comics and from reading that you'll get a pretty good perspective of the industry. I didn't particularly agree with **Tim Burton** being on the list because my feeling is that he will move on to something else and then that will be it. If he turns around and does a soap opera type movie next he'll no longer be powerful in the world of comics but rather in the world of soaps. It was a neat way to look at the industry, though. She (Cat) used to write me letters a long time ago when I was doing DEFENDERS and I used to write back to her along the lines of, "Look, it's hard work we're doing here." I don't know, I feel that those people, and the people at COMICS JOURNAL whom I really have nothing against, by the way, I really like their magazine when I can get it for free *(laughter)*, I would buy it if I could afford it but I can't; my feeling is that — these people are, well, it's like if you took toys and started criticizing them as serious sculpture. I like toy trucks and tractors and I consider some true works of art. I have a nice little model of an International Harvestor tractor and it's a gem. Cost me like five bucks or something. It's nice but if someone came along and started criticizing it like modern sculpture I'd say, "Look, it's a toy!" I think **Gary Groth** and those people are really insightful and

Here and previous page: Thumbnail sketch and the finished piece for issue #1's splash page.

"Comics combine both sides of the brain — linear,

intelligent people but what they're doing is they're criticizing these comics as if they're serious works of literature or art; and they're not. They're not even serious works of art or literature when compared to themselves. You can't compare, say, an issue of X-MEN to an issue of MAUS, it can't be done, it shouldn't be done. But that doesn't mean that the issue of X-MEN should be considered crap because it's not. I read a lot of thriller and mystery novels. I like to read **Agatha Christie** novels. Now I know that an **Agatha Christie** novel is not considered a great work of literature. However, they are very well written mysteries and she is producing art of a kind. People are intimidated by art. We're all dead in the long run. Art is here for our viewing pleasure. What I'm trying to say in my inarticulate way, or what **Gary Groth** can do in his articulate way, or what **Kenneth Smith**, in his so articulate way that no one can understand what he's saying way, is that you can't explain art in these terms because art is more of a right-side-of-the-brain phenomenon. As an artist I know what I'm doing when I draw it. Art is something that can't be understood in the left half of your brain, your writing, reading, thinking mode. The interesting thing about comics is that it combines both sides of the brain because it has linear, verbal material along with abstract art material. In essence the right and left sides of the brain are working together while being in conflict with each other. No other medium has those two forms combined to such an extent. Movies may be a close second. I think that's what hooks comic readers. In the long run I think comics are doomed — but I hope they're not.

CHARLES: *I was going to bring that up. Are comics here to stay as an artform?*

ED: As an artform they're here to stay because every artform that ever existed on Earth is still around. As entertainment I don't know. I'm computer illiterate to an extent. I understand computers but I can't sit down at a computer and work extensively with one. I do understand them and how they impact on society. I think that maybe Virtual Reality will wipe out not only comics but also other forms of entertainment. I think it will have a bigger impact on society than personal computers have had. I think Virtual Reality will be like a new drug on society. You have to figure that the comic audience is already tiny. I've heard somewhere between 500,000-1,000,000 people. Maybe it's bigger. I don't know. On the other hand, everyone reads a comic in one form or another. Everyone knows how to read a comic. They look at a panel and they know how to follow it. The form of comic that we see now I don't know about, but yes, I guess that comics will always be around in one form or another.

CHARLES: *Are comic companies pricing themselves out of the market?*

ED: I don't know. It seemed like before this recession thing you couldn't price them high enough. That's one of the reasons I picked the format I did for my book. I also wanted the high quality paper and color. I hate the bad printing that most comics suffer from. The high cover price, which usually equates out to higher royalties, is obviously a motive. In this case it backfired on me because it doesn't look like I'll be getting any royalties. *(Laughter.)* A movie deal would be wonderful though.

CHARLES: *A movie deal?*

ED: I have to admit that I think this character would be great on screen. I think it has all of the elements and that it might work better as a movie. You could do a lot of action stuff that I just haven't been able to fit in. There's a lot of stuff that has to be explained because it's set in a foreign country. Movies are funny. If you took a movie with very little talking, say **Schwarzenegger's** TOTAL RECALL, and did it verbatim in comic book form you'd have page after page of people standing around with word balloons coming out of their mouths. The amount

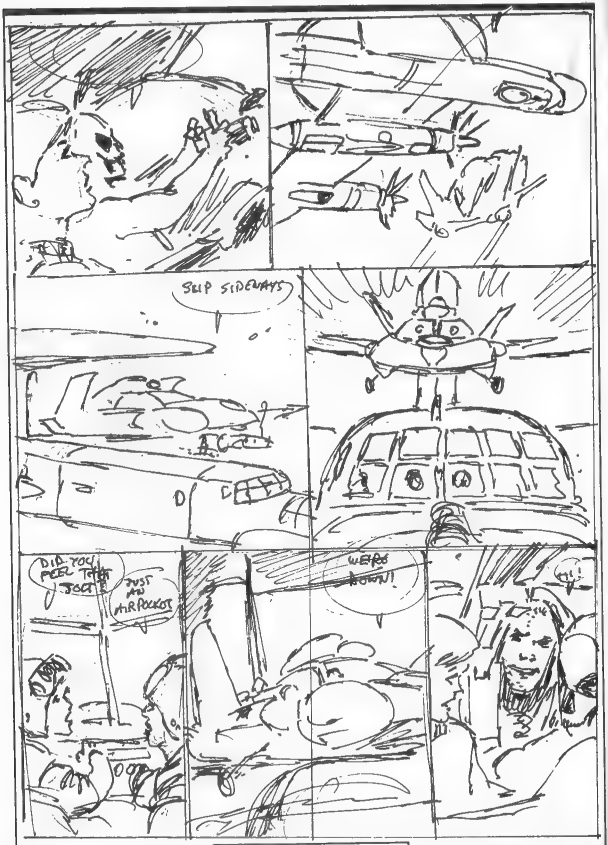
verbal material along with abstract art material."

of dialogue you can put in a comic is so tiny. When I type up the script I look at it and say, "Man, look at all of the lettering the poor letterer has to do." But then I look at all of the stuff I threw away; I write my scripts out long hand on tracing paper to lay them up on the artwork to see if it will all fit and then I usually end up throwing out fifty percent of it. I have a scene in a cemetery where one of the characters goes to see **Khruschchev's** grave. I had to do it in two panels but there is so much about his grave that is interesting. The cemetery is only open one day a year and you need a special pass to get in. I couldn't fit that all in but I didn't want the impression that anyone could go up to his grave whenever they felt like it. I had to work it out although it's not easy to do. I hope it works. I'm too close to the project to read it now but a year from now I might read it and say, "Man , what a piece of garbage," or else, "That was really brilliant." Readers are really conservative. They might not want to buy this when they can buy three copies of the latest X-MEN.

CHARLES: *You've been involved in all aspects of the industry over the years. How do you feel about the combination*

Sketches from Ed's VCR. Scott Glenn and Ed Harris in THE RIGHT STUFF. Ed says that he did these while looking for Andrian's "face."

"You wonder if your work goes over the audience's heads



or if they will appreciate the time that went into a project."

writer/artist mentality in the industry today?

ED: I've gotten into arguments with other writers about this and writers will probably hate my guts, but I almost think that the best writers in comics are the ones that are also artists. **Frank Miller** is an obvious choice. Obviously there are good writers that are not good artists. But even people like **Alan Moore,** you find out that at one time they were trying to be an artist or they do a lot of sketching. It's a prejudice of mine. I think it's a good trend. This is also a personal pet peeve of mine; there are a lot of bad writers making a living in comics. You can get away with bad writing but it's very hard to get away with bad drawing. Everybody can see bad drawing. If you have some really great art and a lousy story people will still consider the comic a great comic. There are some comics that I consider classics that if you went through and analyzed the writing you would say, "Boy, this stinks but it's great to look at!"

CHARLES: *Do you have a preference as far as your talents are concerned?*

ED: I don't know. A lot of times a new pursuit is the thing that you love most. For me that's inking. I love inking. My inking is really rough which fits in well with my new book since it's about the Soviet Union. At times my inking frustrates me but I enjoy doing it. Drawing is a chore for me because I can't sit down and just draw. I labor over everything I draw. I don't enjoy the drawing until the finished product and then I can look over it and say, "Boy, this is neat." Writing I like a lot although I don't think I've done enough yet to really get good at it. I marvel at good writers. If I write a page that I really like — actually, I think in scenes — if I write a scene that I really like then I say that I'm a good writer. Other times I wonder if the readers will realize that I'm doing a bad job at writing. One of the frustrating things about comics is that you wonder about your audience. You wonder if the work is going over their heads or if they will appreciate the time that went into a project. I've really been working a solid year just writing and drawing this comic. I started the research on this project over two years ago. Physically sitting at a drawing table, having my back muscles spas out, it's been about a year. When you think that each of the three issues runs 48 pages, it's going to take somebody say, an hour to read it. So basically I've worked months and months, ate and

Previous page: A quick layout for Curt Swan for issue #3 (Curt's helping). Here: Done on tissue paper, this thumbnail sketch for a scene from issue #1 later had its background (the crowd) expanded.

"I'd like readers to know I spent a lot of time researching

Russia. Russian people were pleased with its authenticity."

slept nothing but this project, woke up in the middle of the night agonizing over it, and then somebody is going to read it in the middle of the night and say, "This stinks" or "This is great." I sometimes wonder if it's worth it. I guess most writers agonize over those things. Unless you're **Stephen King** you're not coming out with more than a novel a year. I think even **Stephen King** has slowed down to two novels a year.

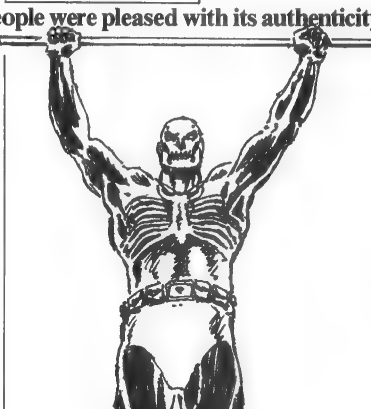
CHARLES: *You obviously have to get a lot of personal satisfaction out of what you do.*

ED: There is, sometimes I wish there was a little more. Obviously, or else I wouldn't be doing it. You've caught me at a time when I recently found out that I wasn't really going to make any money off of this book which is the opposite of the BATMAN thing where the money was rolling in. So sure, you get the artistic satisfaction but then again it's like you've labored so hard over something that someone's going to spend an hour reading. One has to wonder if maybe I've thrown away a year where I could have been out playing and swinging in a hammock. I could have drawn an easier comic; one that didn't require so much research. It's hard to say, it's like I have to do it this way because I don't know any other way to do it. And then again, if 30,000 people each spend an hour reading it then that's 30,000 hours. I guess that would be a good way to rationalize the hours spent working on the book. The key to life is rationalization.

CHARLES: *Now that you're finishing up your work on SKULL & BONES what plans do you have for future work?*

ED: I'm hoping for a miracle, that the thing will sell out and that people will reorder and that DC will say, "Hey, we better give Ed a regular series." Since that's probably not going to happen you'll possibly see me doing DC's new CATWOMAN comic. It's really preliminary but tentatively I will probably be pencilling and inking with **Doug Moench** writing the series. Obviously it's a BATMAN tie-in and the movie will also be coming out at some point; not that I'm just selling out for the money. I'd much rather be doing a SKULL & BONES comic but on the other hand you could do a lot worse than be drawing a comic that **Doug Moench** is writing. Also, I've worked with Doug in the past and I like working with him. He's also a very, very good writer so we'll see.

CHARLES: *Any work besides your DC material?*



Here's another "tissue paper" layout that found its way to the cover of issue #1 (previous page).

ED: No, actually I have an exclusive contract with DC, which isn't a bad deal. I get medical benefits and get invited to the Christmas party. *(Laughter.)* It's nice to be able to not be under contract so that you can run over to another company to do work but that's for young people. That's for people that don't have to worry about their family and medical disasters, stuff like that.

CHARLES: *Any closing thoughts on your SKULL & BONES series?*

ED: Just that I'd like readers to know that I spent a lot of time researching Russia for this project. I've actually shown the work to people visiting here from Russia and they were really pleased with the authenticity. Obviously you have to take a fair amount of liberties because, after all, this is a comic book. What I'm trying for with the series is the spy/thriller atmosphere. Say along the lines of **Tom Clancy.** To tell you the truth my character is only wearing a costume because I thought he would look really cool in a costume and because it's a comic-book tradition. If I were to write a paperback version of this comic he wouldn't even wear the costume. I do think he would look good in costume on the big screen. And obviously I'm hoping that out there somewhere you've got a big movie producer reading this thing and thinking that it would make a good movie. *(Laughter.)* I think the visual aspect of the costume would be really good. I guess what I'm hoping for is that if you read the book you'll get a little insight into the Soviet Union and the Soviet people.

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"I told them I never read comic books. I hardly even

CHUCK PFARRER

I would probably not be a mistake to claim that I feel free to disagree with me, by the way — the era of '50s science fiction slash horror slash anti-communist paranoia films began with 'THE THING (1951) directed by Christian Nyby and produced by Howard Hawks, or to point out that of the films of that era slash genre THE THING stands out as one of the most powerful. Thus it was with some reservations that I went to see John Carpenter's 1982 remake of that classic, and was genuinely stunned when it turned out to be not just worthy of its name but, in my estimation, also deserving of being considered a classic. And now Dark Horse Comics has THE THING in the works as an upcoming series, and I was fortunate to get together with writer Chuck Pfarrer and ask how things were going . . .

DARREL L. BOATZ: *Is this an adaptation of one of the films or are you scripting your own adaptation of "Who Goes There?" by John Campbell — or is this a continuation?*

CHUCK PFARRER: Well, what happened was Dark Horse bought the license to THE THING from Universal, and **Mike Richardson** and **Randy Stradley** approached my agent and asked if I would like to write a comic book for Dark Horse. I told them that I never read comic books, I hardly ever read them when I was a kid, and they said that was perfect and kept after me, so I relented. They told me I could either operate from **Howard Hawks**' version or from the **John Carpenter** version, so I went out and screened them both I'd seen the **Carpenter** version, and I'd seen the **Hawks** version as a kid — and I wound up picking up the **John Carpenter** story right at the end of the movie.

At the end of the movie the MacReady character, who was played by **Kurt Russell,** and another character called Childs, are alone on the ice and their camp is burning down and it appears that they are going to freeze to death. I basically picked up my story from what happens in the morning, what happens next.

DARREL: *So, I take it they survive, or one of them at least?*

CHUCK: Well, I'll give you the run . . . I watched the **John Carpenter** version about eight times and I came away *convinced* that MacReady was contaminated.

DARREL: *Ah!*

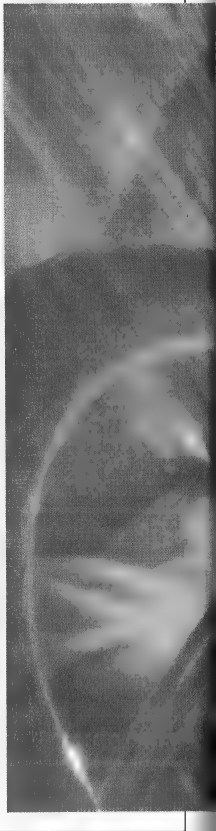
CHUCK: Just little nuances — of course, everybody has an opinion, it's like an **Agatha Christie** story — I was convinced. The things that MacReady did — he disappeared at certain times — and why would he do this, why would he do that. So then I thought, "Okay, I'm convinced he's contaminated, let's assume he's not." *(Laughter.)*

So, my story opens up with Childs carrying MacReady out onto the ice in a horrendous storm, leaving him on the ice and walking away. It looks like MacReady has been left out there to die. MacReady comes to and he's staggering and lost in the blizzard, realizing that he doesn't have very much longer to live, and all of a sudden this enormous white light *pins* him, sort of drops him to his knees, and he looks up and there's the bow of a Japanese whaling ship. And he's taken aboard; he's almost dead and they nurse him back to health.

He's in sick bay and the doctor tells him he's a very lucky man his friend took him out onto the ice where they could find him. And he says, "Childs, where is he?" and the doctor says he's gone back to the camp to get the others. But there

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Chuck Pfarrer
Born: April 1957 — Boston
Occupation: Screenwriter
Years At: About five years now
Credits: DARKMAN; NAVY SEALS; and one shooting this spring called HARD TARGET
Favorite Movies: THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY, that's my all-time favorite; BLADERUNNER



THE THING ® and ™ 1982 and 1992 Universal City Studios, Inc. All rights reserved. Licensed by Merchandising Corporation of America

read them when I was a kid. They said that was perfect."

Horrific and Unrequited: John Higgins artwork from Dark Horse adaptation of John Carpenter's THE THING.

"John Higgins' art is incredible — exactly as I wrote it."

are no others, everybody's dead, and MacReady tries to break out and they drug him.

DARREL: *Geez!*

CHUCK: He comes to a couple of hours later and now he's strapped down in the sick bay alone and he manages to get himself out of the restraints, and he gets dressed and tries to figure out why Childs would bring him out on the ice. "If Childs is contaminated why didn't he just *kill* me? Why would he bring me out here where I could be found . . . unless I am contaminated, too?" So MacReady tests his own blood and determines that he's *not* contaminated, so then he decides he's got to go back and kill Childs and burn the rest of the bodies.

Then he steals the helicopter off the whaling ship — MacReady, of course, is the helicopter pilot, he knows how to do that — and he flies back to the base and sets about burning all the bodies. Then a SEAL team parachutes in, because the camp was reported on fire and the Navy will send these guys to do anything anywhere at any time, and they find MacReady with a flare in one hand and a can of gasoline in the other, and twelve dead, burnt bodies — and he's trying to tell them it's the alien monsters from another planet!

Well, I don't want to give away the rest of it, but thereafter the Thing makes its appearance and MacReady and Childs and what's left of the SEAL team are trying to battle this Thing, and their chase leads them to an Argentinian research camp. The Argentinians have several camps in Antarctica but not like everybody else's; the Argentinians are trying to maintain a presence so that they can claim territory. They have women and children and churches and schools and *everything* at their camps.

DARREL: *Wow.*

CHUCK: They really do, they have *hundreds* of people there.

DARREL: *That's weird.*

CHUCK: So naturally this Thing gets into one of those camps and . . . well, I think you'll find it pretty interesting.

DARREL: *Yeah, that sounds pretty intense! I'm just curious about the Argentinians, why they want to claim the territory down there?*

CHUCK: Well, the minerals — we don't know what kind of mineral wealth there may be down there, gold or platinum or oil or natural gas or any of a zillion other things. And Argentina is the largest country with the closest proximity. I mean, I don't know why they're doing it, either — but they are.

DARREL: *Well, with the hole in the ozone, let them have it.* (Laughter.) *Gee, this THING series sounds like it's going to be good. Who's doing the art?*

CHUCK: John Higgins. It was real exciting for me to do this; I handed in the script and about six weeks later I got some art in the mail from **Higgins** and it was just *incredible!* It was really great, it was . . . well, you know, it's the big cliche, but it was exactly the way I wrote it. It was uncanny. And he really went to town on the monsters, which was delightful.

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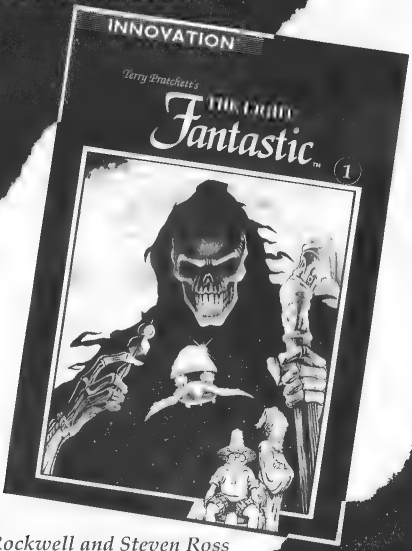

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"The Things don't work together. They're in competition."

DARREL: *That's one of the great things about comics, is the special effects budget isn't really confining.*

CHUCK: Oh, I know! Well, they told me to go to town and not worry about the budget, which I do have to worry about with screenwriting, and we *did* go to town on this one.

DARREL: *That's great. This is your first excursion into comics, so how is it different for you from screenwriting, aside from the budget considerations and things like that?*

CHUCK: Well, I didn't know how to do it and I told **Randy Stradley,** "Look, I'm going to hand this thing in and I won't know how good it is, so don't pull any punches, tell me if it's not up to snuff." In screenwriting you have to write very minimally; you don't get a lot of sentences, you just have a couple of sentences to describe the stage directions. So I tried to do the same thing in the manner in which I wrote comics, and I think I was successful because I didn't try to overwrite anything. If it was just a two-shot on MacReady and Childs then that's *all* I said. But if there was some nuance in MacReady that I wanted, some reflection in his eye or something that was important to the story, then I would put that in. But otherwise I really throttled myself back.

DARREL: *That does sound a lot like screenwriting, just putting in what's necessary.*

CHUCK: I tried to keep that because I figure if you underwrite something it's better than just beating people over the head.

DARREL: *I think that's one thing a lot of people don't understand about writing something for another person to work from, is that the other person is also a creator and it's really a collaboration.*

CHUCK: It really is and I was really *lucky* and *delighted* to get John, he's a very talented guy. We spoke on the phone several times while I was writing these and I really felt it was a collaboration; John came up with all sorts of wonderful angles and little nuances because he wasn't constrained by what I'd written. He's quite a talent. Dark Horse gave me copies of some of the things he'd worked on before, and they asked me if I'd like to work with him and I said absolutely.

DARREL: *I'm curious, did you go back to the original short story "Who Goes There?"*

CHUCK: No, I didn't — and I've been asked that before — I actually *tried* but I couldn't find it. It's probably easy to find, I probably should have kept looking, but

I did go back and watch the **Howard Hawks** film. When I was first thrashing about and trying to decide which way to take this, one of the things I wanted to do on this was sort of put a little bit of topspin on the traditional alien. When you were watching THE THING if one or two people were contaminated . . . if there were three people in the room and two were contaminated, you would *think* that the two that were contaminated were working together, that they are in concert. The spin I tried to put on this is that these Things *don't* work together, they are in *competition.*

DARREL: *Wow.*

CHUCK: They're more than happy to knock each other off. That makes them more difficult to fight, because they would turn on themselves; a Thing would do anything, do you know what I'm saying?

DARREL: *Yeah.*

CHUCK: That's a neat little twist that these guys sort of find out, that it's not playing team ball. The Thing will gnaw its own leg off it it has to. And those clues were given in the **Carpenter** film but he didn't go all the way and say that, that this Thing would do that.

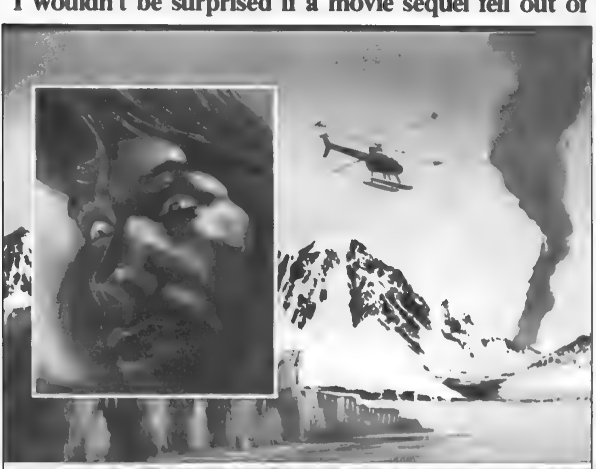
DARREL: *Well, the big difference between the two films is the Hawks version has a very definite ending where at least it seems like the good guys have won and there's no more threat.*

CHUCK: Right.

DARREL: *But . . . it's really hard to say which one to prefer, they're both great films.*

CHUCK: They were. There's something about the **Hawks** version, though . . . it's got this kind of Hollywood innocence about it. They're up there at the North Pole and the scientist is smoking a pipe and he's got an ascot and a smoking jacket on, in this like nice hunting lodge

"I wouldn't be surprised if a movie sequel fell out of



that even has elk antlers on the walls. *(Laughter.)* It's kind of neat and naive. But when you look at the **Carpenter** version you see that these guys don't take showers because there's no water, they're grizzly, and it looks like a real scientific outpost. And in the **Hawks** version the Thing was stealing blood products and killing animals because it was trying to raise a brood, it was really caring for its young. In the **Carpenter** version the Thing really didn't appear to *care* about anything, it just wanted to make replicas and rebuild a ship.

DARREL: *Right.*

CHUCK: I enjoyed both of them a lot and I tried to steal as much as I could from both of them. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *I liked in the Carpenter film where they took a clip from the Hawks version and worked it into the story.*

CHUCK: Right, I picked up on that too, that was cool.

DARREL: *In the Carpenter version — of course, this was the fatalist vision where everybody dies — there was a very strong suggestion that there might be more Things out there, waiting to be awakened or even awake and heading to another camp.*

CHUCK: Right.

DARREL: *Are you doing anything with that?*

CHUCK: Well, MacReady in both the **Carpenter** version and in *my* version wants to hunt and kill these Things; failing to kill one is bad for MacReady because he knows these Things can go to sleep in the ice. If you don't kill one and it gets away and goes to sleep in the ice, that's just as bad as it being around and knocking about because *somebody* is going to find it sooner or later. So, we have those ticking time bombs all over the place, and I use that in my story; that losing one of these Things out in the snow and having it go to ground is something that they can't allow to happen.

DARREL: *Sounds like this is something that could maybe be picked up and done*

this. I would be delighted. I basically gave them a film."

as a movie sequel.

CHUCK: Yeah, I think so, and there's been some interest, but it's very early to tell — and this being Hollywood, who knows? But I wouldn't be surprised if a movie sequel fell out of this. I would be delighted! *(Laughter.)* Essentially, what I wrote for Dark Horse is a movie in terms of its scope. I basically gave them a film from point A to point B. They get there, there's a dilemma, there's a problem, there's a chase, there appears to be a resolution; it blows all up in terms of its pacing.

DARREL: *The thing is a lot of sequels don't really seem to have much point except to rehash what the original did.*

CHUCK: Right, but I think — and God knows what will make it to the screen — but given this new twist in that these Things do not work together, we have an interesting new spin on the villain. Another thing is, talking about sequels, *both* these movies were so well done and are such *landmarks* in science fiction that any sequel, even this comic book, has to be approached with a little awe, you know.

DARREL: *When the Carpenter film came out, there was a time there in the '70s and '80s when remakes were popping up all over the place, and it was one of the few remakes that really did something different, it didn't detract from the original. It was worth doing.*

CHUCK: It was. I think one of the things that was problematic about the **Carpenter** version was . . . whenever you've got a monster the *less* you see it the *better!* It's like the first **ALIEN**, I got an ulcer *waiting* for that thing to pop out! You *never* knew where it was, you *never* knew when it was going to pop out. Well, in the **Carpenter** version we got to see this Thing a *lot*, and it was *horrible*, but there towards the end I'm looking at this great big Christmas tree of meat and teeth and claws and I'm going, "Okay, let's kill this damn Thing." *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Yeah, you've gotten used to it by then.*

CHUCK: You're used to it, right. But you want to keep the shock value going.

DARREL: *In the Hawks version that wasn't the way it worked, although the monster wasn't as grotesque.*

CHUCK: Right, and if you look at the **Hawks** version now — and there will be some readers who haven't seen it — if you put a 1990s eye on the **Hawks** version it isn't very frightening.

DARREL: *Well, it played into the '50s paranoia thing.*

CHUCK: Exactly, the whole *zeitgeist* there was the Red Menace, the enemy without sort of thing. And that's why you can't separate the movie from the times, but I still think it's a classic. I hope people go out and see it.

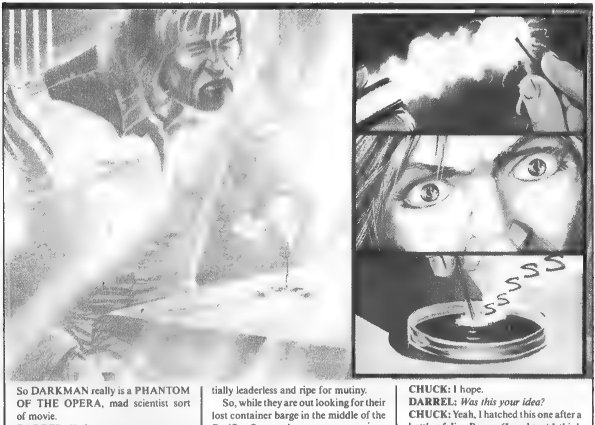
DARREL: *Let's segue. You were the screenwriter on DARKMAN?*

CHUCK: Yes.

DARREL: *Did you originate this idea?*

CHUCK: Well, what happened is **Sam Raimi** came to me — I'd written a thing for him called ATLAS which still is knocking around, hasn't been made yet — and Sam had an idea about an actor, who gets disfigured by the mob. Sam and I had more than a couple of beers and kicked this thing around and what fell out of that was the real heart of DARKMAN, which was a scientist who was working on a liquid skin polymer and through an incidental act of violence is disfigured and left for dead, and subjected to this operation because they thought he was a homeless person. The operation, although it prevented him from feeling any pain, made him insane.

Comics: "I love the art form. I really love writing them."



So DARKMAN really is a PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, mad scientist sort of movie.

DARREL: *Yeah.*

CHUCK: Sam and I really kicked it around. But DARKMAN is more of a visual piece because the story itself isn't anything really new. What made that a special film is Sam; Sam is sort of a visual *genius* and he just directed the hell out of it.

DARREL: *Yeah. A lot of comics people were really interested when that came out, and Marvel did its own version even.*

CHUCK: Right.

DARREL: *Now, I've got something called VIRUS marked down in my notes. What can you tell us about VIRUS?*

CHUCK: Well, it's a four-issue thing coming out from Dark Horse — I don't know when it's going to be out, probably within a couple of months — and it opens up basically out of THE CAINE MUTINY. There's an ocean-going tug and container barge caught in a typhoon and the captain is the kind of person whose daddy owns the shipping company; he should be driving a bus and not a tug, and he gives some orders that will sink them. The chief engineer, just like in THE CAINE MUTINY, refuses to carry out an order, and saves everyone's life when he cuts away the barge, but now the captain is pissed and the crew is essentially leaderless and ripe for mutiny.

So, while they are out looking for their lost container barge in the middle of the Pacific Ocean they come across an abandoned Chinese satellite tracking ship. This thing is 800 feet long and *covered* with deep space antennas and everything else, and the captain says they're going to salvage this ship. And the chief engineer says he's totally out of his mind because the Chinese are going to be looking for this thing and when they find it they'll sink the tug and take their ship back. Well, against what everybody thinks should be done, these guys get on the ship, and what essentially we have here is ALIEN set on this Chinese tracking ship. But our nemesis here is a virus.

The Chinese were conducting CETI research, trying to communicate with extra-terrestrial beings, and they were the first to ever get an answer from outer space. But what they got wasn't a big hello, what they got was an intergalactic computer virus.

DARREL: *Oh, terrific.*

CHUCK: And it's taken over the entire ship, so the ship itself is the monster. And we've got twelve people, like the crew in ALIEN, but what they're on is an 800-foot-long nuclear-powered haunted house — and it's TEN LITTLE INDIANS.

DARREL: *Wow, that's great.*

CHUCK: I hope.

DARREL: *Was this your idea?*

CHUCK: Yeah, I hatched this one after a bottle of Jim Beam. *(Laughter.)* I think it's going to be fun. What's kind of neat about it is the monster has no physicality so it *must* take pieces of machinery to *build* itself, to make crawlers and fliers and walkers and little things to attack the people. This thing will use machine parts if they are available, but if they are not available it will use parts of another great machine, it'll use human body parts.

DARREL: *Wow, the ultimate waldos.*

CHUCK: Exactly. We're talking about THE TERMINATOR done half in Radio Shack and half in flank steak.

DARREL: *This sounds bizarre.*

CHUCK: It'll be pretty good. I think it'll be fun.

DARREL: *Who's doing the art on this?*

CHUCK: I think **Geoff Darrow** is going to design our monsters for us.

DARREL: *Ooo, yeah, I've seen his stuff on HARD-BOILED.*

CHUCK: He hasn't committed yet but I have my fingers crossed. He's quite good.

DARREL: *Well, is there anything else you'd like to say before we turn off the recorder?*

CHUCK: Well, for somebody who never read comic books, I'm now sort of a believer. I love the artform, I really love writing for them, and I'm going to continue to do it. It's fun!

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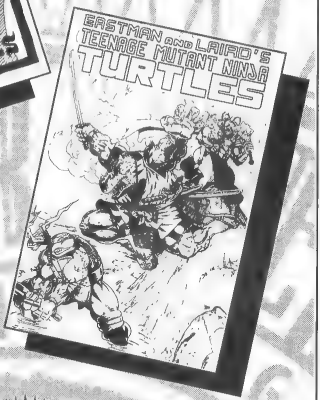

TMNT 47

WRITTEN & PENCILLED
BY MICHAEL DOONEY
INKED BY
KEITH AIKEN
BACK-UP STORY BY
STAN SAKAI

MIRAGE PUBLISHING

"ALIENS III comes out soon. A lot of characters in

JOHN ARCUDI

Taking over *THE THING* after *Chuck Pfarrer's initial two-issue story is veteran comics scribe John Arcudi. While we were obligated not to reveal any information which might spoil Chuck's story, we were still able to get a fun and informative interview and find out how things stand . . .*

DARREL L. BOATZ: *Chuck Pfarrer started this new THING series — and you are picking it up from where he leaves off?*

JOHN ARCUDI: Yes, I start right where the second script ended.

DARREL: *Chuck mentioned that these Things could go out and fall asleep on the ice, so there might be a lot of them out there.*

JOHN: I suppose it's possible. It's nothing I really would want to get into, but yeah — after all, in the movie it had been asleep for 50 million years or something, so I guess it could sleep for another six or seven. Anything is conceivable; after all, this is science fiction.

DARREL: *One thing that occurred to me, after I got done talking with Chuck, is that with the hole in the ozone and stuff, the warming of the planet, these*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: John Arcudi
Born: Let's just skip it
Occupation: Writer
Years At: Six
Credits: TERMINATOR; MASK; ALIENS; this THING thing; SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN; CRACKED MAGAZINE; and I'd rather not discuss the rest
Favorite Comics: None. Once you know how it's done and you're doing it, it becomes really technical, you just see everything and think, "Gee, I wonder what he had to go through to get this done."

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Mark's series either get killed or are further developed."

Things might wake up en masse.

JOHN: Yeah. I mean, that's assuming that they are out there, and that's for another writer further down the line. This is all taking place — mine and his anyway — right around when the movie ended, within up to a couple of months afterwards. I don't remember in the movie if they actually gave a year, but the movie came out in '82 so it's between '82 and '91. I don't think we have to worry about the ice melting until '93 at least. *(Laughter.)*

That's something for someone to consider further down the line; I don't really know what Dark Horse has planned for it. I don't know if they're going to continue with the storyline that we have continued with — or if they're going to go way out into the future or whatever. The way mine ends they could do it either way.

DARREL: *Of course, what Dark Horse plans probably depends a lot on how well the book sells.*

JOHN: Hopefully it'll sell *well.* That's why they're in the business of doing it, to produce good material, and hopefully that good material will sell well.

DARREL: *They've got a good track record with ALIENS so far.*

JOHN: Yeah, God bless 'em! *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *And you've worked on that. Where does yours fit in with everything else in the ALIENS things?*

JOHN: Mine comes after EARTHWAR; GENOCIDE comes right after EARTHWAR. It doesn't involve any of the characters from **Mark Verheiden's** stories — I think that has a *lot* to do with the fact that ALIENS III is going to be coming out soon and a lot of the characters in Mark's series either get killed or are further developed in the movie. They don't want to have to deal with the conflicts.

DARREL: *Of course, the movie people have the say over everything?*

JOHN: Yeah, exactly. If they want to ignore it, our material in the comics — and apparently they *do* — that's their prerogative. I just hope the *fans* can reconcile that. There's nothing *wrong* with that, I think; you know, going two different directions.

DARREL: *That's one thing I was*

Previous page: Two panels from Dark Horse's sequel to John Carpenter's THE THING. Here: Detail from the cover of ALIENS: GENOCIDE. Art is by John Higgins and Arthur Suydam.

"I don't have a set way of working. I work in different

wondering about; it seems like an almost impossible constraint, having a completely different company that you're not even working with —

JOHN: Actually, we *are* working with them. They see the script and say, "Ho-ho, wait a minute! No, we don't want *this* to happen!" *(Laughter.)* They haven't *done* that with ALIENS because I think they sort of feel the same way I do, is that there's really not going to be a problem. The fans will read the comics and when a movie comes out I don't think any of the fans are going to say, "Shit, this has got *nothing* to do with the *comics!*" No, I don't think that's going to happen. Plus you've got a far wider audience for the movies, you know.

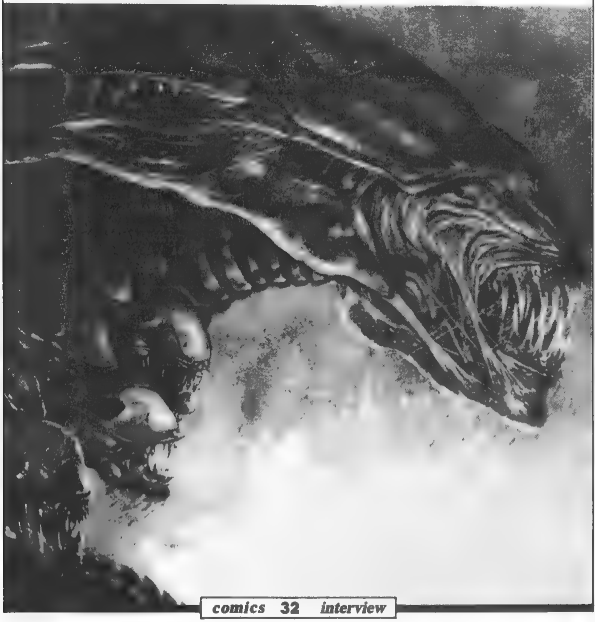
DARREL: *Getting back to THE THING, did you go back and read "Who Goes There?" by John Campbell?*

JOHN: Yeah, and I saw the first movie. The story offers more material, but I don't think Dark Horse will really want me to touch on too much of that; the fact that it can read minds and such sort of limits the competitiveness of the human beings. If this Thing can not only reproduce any one of them but can also tell what they're thinking just by being in their proximity —

DARREL: *Well, it makes sense in a certain way that was never really touched on in the movies, which is how these Things are able to impersonate people without giving themselves away.*

JOHN: It's touched upon more in the story and maybe a little *simply* explained in the movies, but it has the ability — I mean, even if it reads their minds it couldn't necessarily *mimic* them — the way it mimics them is it posesses each cell, it *becomes* each cell, and each cell continues to function as it functioned before.

Here we have another version of Dark Horse's ALIENS, this one by Dave Dorman. Story is by Steve Bissette. On the next page, more of THE THING, by Higgins.



fashion from script to script, depending on the artist."

DARREL: *Right.*
JOHN: All the memories are there, everything.
DARREL: *It's a . . . it's such a strange concept —*
JOHN: It is, and **John Campbell** was a strange writer, and a *brilliant* writer. I mean, not the best writer, but his plots, his premises, his *ideas*, were all — sometimes a little bit difficult to understand — but always fascinating. I like his stuff a lot. I don't like his writing too much, but I like reading his stuff just for the incredible ideas.
DARREL: *It's a nice intellectual exercise. That's mainly what I enjoy about reading, is when an author can give me something to think about.*
JOHN: Yeah, and **John Campbell** *definitely* does that! Even his letters — I've got a big, fat book — are fascinating. This guy was thinking every day of his life, you know. In his letters he's expounding on *everything*, from human nature to politics to fantasy and science fiction — in one letter. He covered the whole range. And he was the man to pull it off, to speak with authority on *any* of those subjects.
DARREL: *Chuck talked a little bit about his writing technique; he basically said he doesn't add any unnecessary stuff to it, so I'm kind of wondering about your approach?*
JOHN: In a lot of respects I guess it's the same. I like to think that I don't add unnecessary stuff to *any* of my stories. It depends on what you're trying to do. Sometimes you want to set up a certain mood — especially with *my* script, it deals a lot with the paranoia aspect — and you have to develop characters, for example, to *suffer* the paranoia. You have to help the artist, you can't expect him to read your mind, and detail sometimes is necessary.

It depends on what kind of story you're writing.

Some of my scripts — especially if I know ahead of time the artist I'm working with, I didn't in this case — it helps to leave out detail and let them go, and usually they please you, and they *surprise* you. I really don't have one set way of working, I even work in a different *fashion* from script to script depending on the artist, depending on my mood, depending on — what has to be done!
DARREL: *That makes sense. Now, MASK with Chris Warner is in my notes. Is this M-A-S-K?*
JOHN: Right.
DARREL: *I remember something with a*

"I wish we could leave the origin of the Mask

Another painting by Arthur Suydam, on ALIENS: GENOCIDE.

undiscussed. I think origins are just fucking stupid."

Q-U-E spelling.

JOHN: Yeah, **Mark Badger** did that originally. Chris sort of revamped the character and he and I discussed it, and then I did it with **Doug Mahnki** in a series called MAYHEM which Chris edited. I guess . . . it's difficult for me to really remember who did what, but Chris definitely gave it the look and sort of gave me the ideas on which direction he wanted it to go. I imagine some of that might have come down from **Mike Richardson,** but Chris put a lot of work into it and that's not to be forgotten.

Then I took it over in MAYHEM — it was originally in DARK HORSE PRESENTS and pretty confusing to a lot of people, me in particular. *(Laughter.)* I tried to mainstream it, I guess you might say, while sort of taking over with my own format of how I perceived it. I wanted it to be a lot more funny. And a lot *different* from your average superhero — when I say "mainstream it" I don't mean make it like typical genre crap, just make it a little more accessible to the readers. And it did fairly well, got its own series. Did *phenomenally* well.

DARREL: *For anybody who's unfamiliar with MASK, what's it about?*

JOHN: Well, it's about a mask. *(Laughter.)* More, it's about the people who *find* the mask. The mask . . . I wish we could just leave the origin undiscussed; in fact, I think origins are just fucking stupid. *(Laughter.)* But, it provides the wearer . . . it has a certain *personality* of its own but it has no *agenda* of its own. You put it on and you're possessed of some pretty wacky powers. The best way to describe it, the most succinct way to sort of describe it, is you sort of become a **Tex Avery** cartoon. Someone can drop an anvil on your head and for a minute you'll be dazed or whatever, but you'll be OK the next panel. Someone can blow your head off and you'll be OK whenever you feel like being OK.

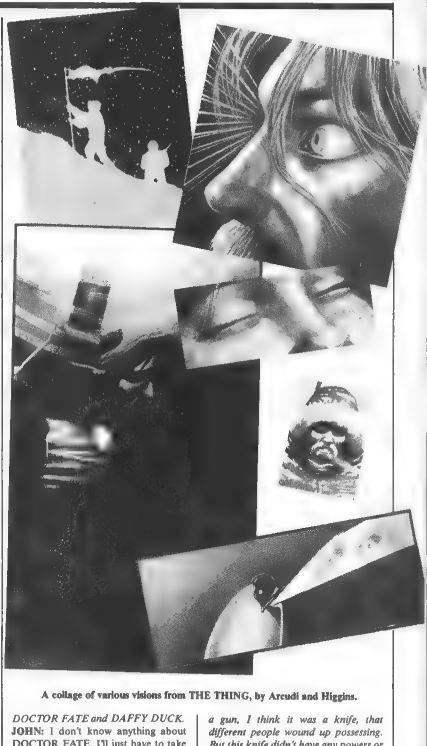
Some people have trouble with that; some people immediately react to that because they have such a *need* for this sort of wackiness to take them over. The first guy who got it in MAYHEM — and they're reprinting that in MASK #0; brilliant, huh? — the first guy who got it was this real vindictive son of a bitch and he went after everybody that ever, like, looked at him funny. The second guy that got it was a cop, and that's what it was in this last four-issue series, and he became a vigilante. The next series I don't want to get too much into, but two different people get their hands on it.

DARREL: *Sounds like a cross between DOCTOR FATE and DAFFY DUCK.*

JOHN: I don't know anything about DOCTOR FATE, I'll just have to take your word for that — but I guess, yeah, there's probably something there. You'd have to ask **Mike Richardson**, he originally created it.

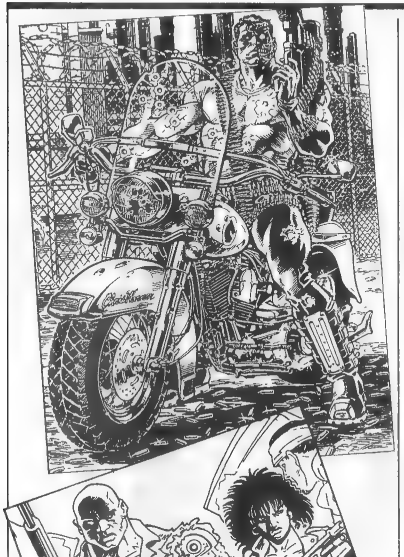
DARREL: *That's an interesting concept. I read a story once about a knife or a gun, I think it was a knife, that different people wound up possessing. But this knife didn't have any powers or anything.*

JOHN: I know what you're saying; it depends on the writer's abilities, but that sounds a lot more interesting. There's no mask to blame it on, you've got a knife and each person creates his own agenda,



A collage of various visions from THE THING, by Arcudi and Higgins.

"I created a new character for DHP called The Creep."



No Arcudi interview would be complete without a couple of old shots of TERMINATOR, by Chris Warner (top) and Warner and Guinan.

as it were; one person might use it to cut meat and another might use it to carve his boss up. That sounds pretty cool, actually.

DARREL: *Are you working on anything else you'd like to talk about?*

JOHN: Well, I'm working on the next MASK series. I'm working on a new character that I created — since HOMICIDE was such a *dismal* failure; I guess people read it, but not enough — I created a new character for DARK HORSE PRESENTS currently called The Creep. It's about a guy who has acromegaly. Fortunately, acromegaly is a manageable disease today, it won't kill you anymore from enlargement of the heart. Anyway, the Creep has acromegaly and he's a private detective. It's kind of a cross between HOMICIDE and . . . Jesus, I don't know, something else!

Just so long as people read it, you know. That's what I want, to reach a few people with a few good stories. Well, more than a few. I think I did reach a few with HOMICIDE. That was something I really really enjoyed writing, and now THE CREEP has sort of taken the place of HOMICIDE because I *think* — I probably am wrong, as usual — I'll reach more people and hopefully write more stories. That's what I want to do, continue with one character as long as I can. I want to *know* the character, develop the character, do things that I never got to do with HOMICIDE with one character. But if people aren't reading it you can't do too many stories, you know. And Dark Horse could not be to blame if they said they were losing money on it and couldn't do it anymore, so I've got my fingers crossed.

DARREL: *Well, I think it's important for people to realize that people making comic books have to make a living.*

JOHN: Yeah. I mean, I don't think that I should necessarily appeal to the fans to help me make a living. Certainly, if I don't have what it takes then they shouldn't read a thing I do.

DARREL: *Right. Well, we've got a few minutes left. Where does John Arcudi want to go next or ultimately?*

JOHN: I don't know, I really don't know. I want to continue writing for a living. I've considered journalism, I've considered prose, more precisely books and short stories. And I'd like to do a screenplay or two. But I don't know that any one of those is #1 in my future and #2 what I want to do *forever*. I like doing comics a lot. There are a lot of frustrations, but there are a lot of frustrations in trying to get to the store on time.

DARREL: *Yeah, and if you're having fun doing what you're doing —*

JOHN: That's the most important thing. Even if I decide I don't want to write anymore, just as long as I'm doing what I want to do. Believe me, if I don't have fun writing I'll stop, even though it might endanger my lifestyle. That's why I write for a living now. I'm very fortunate to be able to do that, *very* fortunate that I don't have to work 9:00 to 5:00 and then come home and write in my spare time and use it as a supplementary income. I think if I had to go back to working 9:00 to 5:00 again I'd *shoot* myself. Especially since I worked 9.00 to 5:00 in New York for about ten years, that was fucking hell. Nothing worse than taking the subway with 60,000 other people — on your train, that is — who probably could have used some form of deodorant that morning and are just as unhappy to be there as you are. Oh man, oh God — no wonder I'm so fucked up. *(Laughter.)*

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"One of the things I wanted to do with DARK NEBULA

PAUL POWER: *When I met you I was doing album covers and things like that —some advertising — and starting to do PROFESSOR OM. You had always worked on DARK NEBULA. What really brought that about?*

TAD PIETRZYKOWSKI: Well, it's funny, there was a song back in the '70s called "Captain Zero" and that's what I originally called the character, then after awhile I thought that was a *dopey* name and I came up with the name Dark Nebula and retooled the whole thing. I was looking at making it more palatable, more *marketable*, to the average person, and that was around the same time as when I hooked up with you. Looking at the stuff you were doing on PROFESSOR OM helped me with my craftsmanship, actually getting the idea in my head of getting away from the amateur stuff and looking at it more in a professional light. It was all really just a *hobby* to start with.

PAUL: *You were very big on John Byrne at that stage.*

TAD: Yeah.

PAUL: *You were the ultimate John Byrne freak.*

TAD: You put me onto him!

PAUL: *Did I?*

TAD: You did, the Charlton stuff, DOOMSDAY+1 and all that different stuff that he did. Him and **Mike Zeck,** they both appeared on the scene at roughly the same time, and you showed me the Charlton stuff. Then they broke to Marvel and I picked up from there. You've got a lot to answer for. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Now, in the time that I left it seemed that the Australian comics started to happen up again, with some of the local guys making good in the States as well. You want to give us a bit of background there? DARK NEBULA, I feel, got a lot of the other guys on doing their own creations.*

TAD: Well, a lot of people were *starting* to do their stuff but I'd already *done* mine by that stage. One of the things I wanted to do with DARK NEBULA was get other people motivated, and I feel that I've really done that. I met **Gary Chaloner** just after the first DARK NEBULA book back in '82 had been released and he was thinking about putting something together, and I was helping him with that.

PAUL: *That was what?*

TAD: It went through different names, *project* names, at the time, and one name for it was ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED and it was going to be like an anthology title with his characters and someone else's, and DARK NEBULA was there. That eventually turned over and became CYCLONE!, and it had changed so much from the original concept. There was DARK NEBULA in the anthology, and THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON made an appearance — this was after THE SOUTHERN SQUADRON had appeared in the first two and *only* issues of OZ COMICS, and they then migrated over to CYCLONE!

There was another of mine called THE SOUTHERN CROSS, my answer to CAPTAIN AMERICA, an Australian Captain America set in the 1940s who wasn't Mom and apple pie and that sort of thing, just an Aussie super-hero. He

TAD PIETRZYKOWSKI

was get other people motivated, and I feel I've done that."

All artwork accompanying this interview ©1992 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., unless otherwise noted.

I HAD HOPED FOR THE BODY.
NO MATTER ...THIS WILL HAVE TO SUFFICE.
WHERE ONCE STOOD THE DARK NEBULA...
...IS NOW THE ANGEL OF DEATH!
TREMBLE, PEOPLE OF CAILEU, AT WHAT YOU HAVE WROUGHT UPON YOURSELVES!
WITNESS, NOW, WHAT YOUR FOLLY HAS REAPED!
THEN... SOMETHING HAPPENS
WHAT! HE WASN'T CONSUMED BY OUR ASSAULT!
HE WAS IN A DORMANT PHASE...
...THAT WAS DARK FIRE!
HE'S STILL ALIVE!

DARK NEBULA ©1992 Southern Cross Comics

DARK NEBULA #6, July, 1990. Art by Jason Paulos. Created and written by Tad.

didn't have to blow his horn, he just did his stuff, and that's the way I always thought CAPTAIN AMERICA should have been in the first place.

PAUL: *If he were an Australian —*

TAD: Exactly, yeah. And that was the basic format of CYCLONE!, and that eventually saw light in '85, so this is the progress from '82 to '85. A lot of this stuff was being worked on in that time but it had never seen the light of day, then in '85 the CYCLONE! came out and it really turned up the Australian scene.

PAUL: *You guys all got together and started to do your own projects, you all sort of met and all these other comics grew out of it, right. For those who don't know who Dark Nebula is, give us a brief background on the character.*

TAD: Okay. Dark Nebula is an Australian astronaut by the name of Mark Medula. He had been commissioned in the RAAF, did some time over in America, worked on the NASA project, and then came back over to Australia to work on the Australian astronaut program, which of course doesn't exist in real life — but hey, we're talking about *comics* here! *(Laughter.)* Anyway, coming back from a mission from Mars to this lunar orbiting station called Threshold, and Threshold is not answering, and it turns out the place has been taken over and subjugated by this alien by the name of Surilous. This is sounding like real '50s schlock sci-fi here, but it gets better.

Anyway, Surilous has psionic powers, powers of the mind, telepathy and telekinesis and that sort of thing, and they get into a conflict, Mark and Surilous. And they kill each other. Mark blows Surilous's head off as Surilous just destroys Mark's brain, and they both go off to their final reward. Death, meeting

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them along the way, starts spouting out this big prophesy about how they were fated from the dawn of time and from here shall come a champion called the Dark Nebula — this is the expurgated version, mind you. So, because Surilous's head has been blown off, the two souls go back into Mark's body, and Mark has access to Surilous's psionic powers. Mark's in charge because if Surilous were in charge he would go nuts and destroy our planet.

PAUL: *Is he in constant conflict with himself?*

TAD: Exactly, it's sort of a JEKYLL AND HYDE thing, but it was never really intended that way. I was going more for that pathos, that *twist* to the character — he's not perfect, he's got his faults, and he's always at odds within himself. That's important.

PAUL: *That goes back to you liking SPIDER-MAN so much.*

TAD: Oh, yeah, I love SPIDER-MAN, still have my SPIDEYS. So anyway, during the course of what's happened we find out that when Mark and Surilous have . . . well, when Mark destroyed Surilous the actual killing of him did something to the psionic bond between Surilous and the Threshold crew and all of the crew is psychotic, all of a sudden this space station is manned by all these psychos, and Mark has to get his crew members off the space station and back to Earth. They get back to Earth and they realize they've left this big time bomb up there that's got all this armament poised at Australia, so his first mission basically is to disarm that situation and sort it all out. During the course of this Surilous re-awakens and they have this mother of a shit fight —

PAUL: *Inside his head?*

TAD: Yeah. Well, there's two battles, one

Pencils by one of Tad's favorites, John Byrne — SHE-HULK panels with flashback of Subby and Cap — note that Paul introduced him to John's art.

IKE WINS
COLOR, JUST A LOUD WHISPER
THEN IT HAPPENED! ONE DAY, OUT OF A CLEAR BLUE SKY, THE SUB-MARINER RETURNED!
I GUESS... WE WANTED TOO LONG...
AND WANTED

"I applaud DC for what they did with CRISIS."

outside and one inside

PAUL: *What's been the reaction to DARK NEBULA here?*

TAD: The reaction has been great, he's very popular. I'm surprised. When I first put the character together I thought it'd be a nice thing in juvenile fiction, it would be nice for kids around the age of eleven to fifteen to enjoy, and the more I put into it the more I thought I was writing myself *out* of that market. I thought maybe it was getting a little too intellectual. And, let's face it, a lot of the comic-book companies have written themselves out of the kiddie market now

PAUL: *American comics.*

TAD: Yeah, the American comics. Before I knew it the response that I was getting was chiefly from eleven-year-olds to fifteen-year-olds, and I've got people around 30 and that age who are there, following the comic on a different level; so it actually appeals to people on two different levels, the intellectual level and the shit fight level, the fun that's in there.

PAUL: *Would you say that what you're doing is kind of like an Australian version of a Marvel comic?*

TAD: Oh, absolutely — I'm just having a hell of a time! But I'll qualify that by saying a '60s Marvel comic book, because I honestly believe the best stuff Marvel did was in the '60s. At the moment I think they've missed the mark, I really do.

PAUL: *That's interesting. Don't you like X-MEN now, and all that?*

TAD: Well, I *like* them but . . . well, X-MEN is one of my favorite titles, but I can *follow* it. I feel sorry for the kids who would pick it up now and have *no* chance of following it unless they went back and picked up all the back issues, which of course cost a fortune. I've always believed that comics are for kids and that kids should be able to appreciate them. See, the comics really have grown up with *us*, from the '60s they've actually aged with everyone else. But certain people would find it so hard to pick up the plot. I applaud DC for what they did with CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. Okay, that created problems in itself —

PAUL: *You mean because they cleaned house.*

TAD: Exactly, that was wonderful.

PAUL: *The readers of DARK NEBULA, do they agree with you? Do you hve discussions about this?*

TAD: Well, that's a difficult one. I think there are some who feel the same way as I do, but I really can't answer that because I really haven't gone into that with a lot of people. To qualify what I said earlier about Marvel mssising the mark, I and people of my same vintage do appreciate that stuff, but the young kids wouldn't be able to follow the complex *continuity* of something like X-MEN

PAUL: *Actually, I disagree with that because I see young kids in the States buying — they get the back issues as well — the X-MEN CLASSICs, which is kind of a nice thing because it's all available to them. It just seems to get stronger and stronger. But what I really want to get at is to talk about Australian comics now. What's it like working with Chaloner and all those guys?*

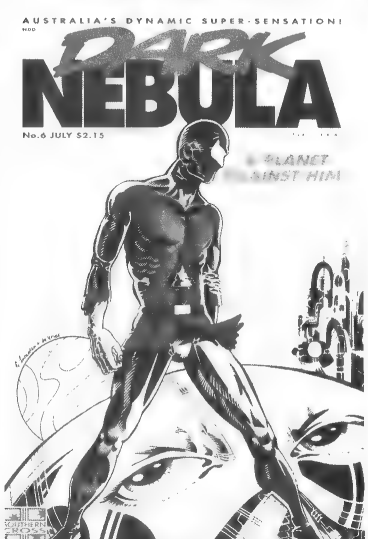
TAD: Well, the four major people involved in CYCLONE! from the outset were **Gary Chaloner, Dave DeVries, Glen Lumsden** and myself. We were all originally in Sydney, but Gary's now in Western Australia, Dave and Glen are in South Australia. I'm still in Sydney. They're there because it's much cheaper, I'm here because that's where my work is.

PAUL: *Tell is also a radio dj here, and now you call the races.*

TAD: Well, I coordinate them. Someone's got to keep it together.

PAUL: *Have you ever plugged your comic books over the air?*

TAD: Occasionally, and I've made mention of different things to do with comics on my radio show, and comics fans have picked up on them. When TEENAGE

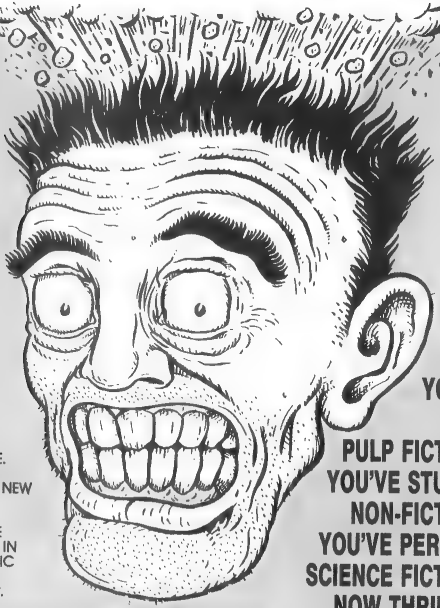


DARK NEBULA cover by Glen Lumsden and David D. deVris.

DARK NEBULA ©1992 Southern Cross Comics

COMICS AND STORIES THAT WILL *BLOW* YOUR MIND

CRUCIAL fiction



JULIAN LAWRENCE.

A MAJOR NEW TALENT.

FIRST ISSUE AVAILABLE IN FINE COMIC SHOPS IN DECEMBER.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

YOU'VE READ PULP FICTION-- YOU'VE STUDIED NON-FICTION-- YOU'VE PERUSED SCIENCE FICTION-- NOW THRILL TO CRUCIAL FICTION!

"There's a horse called Sub-Mariner, another

MUTANT NINJA TURTLES were coming out, there were all those shows and everything in different places, I actually came on the air and gave a bit of background to how it started, how it was a parody of DAREDEVIL and X-MEN and all that sort of stuff.

PAUL: *Were you doing this on the commercial radio station?*

TAD: The racing station. I thought, "What the heck, I'll give them a bit of background on certain things."

PAUL: *What was the reaction?*

TAD: People were surprised that this announcer was knowledgeable about these different things, things from TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES to THE PHANTOM. Anything that came to ear that had anything to do with comics, I'd sort of throw in a mention; like there's so many greyhounds and horses that are named after comic-book characters. There's a horse going around called Sub-Mariner, another one called Captain America. There's a dog called Iron Fist. It just cracks me up when I see them!

PAUL: *In Australia, just for a bit of background, betting on races, greyhounds and the horses, is extremely big, and we have legal betting offices, kind of like the off-track betting services, just right across the country. It's a gambling country.*

TAD: Absolutely.

PAUL: *That's why I was kind of stunned that you were able to mention this stuff which has nothing to do with racing at all and getting a good reaction. You never got any flak for that?*

TAD: None! Not at all. I think people appreciate the background to things like that.

PAUL: *Have you thought about doing a show which is purely comics related?*

TAD: I'd like to do a mixed-media show, like to do with theatre and comics and anything to do with the popular culture. That'd be fun! But nothing that was way off left of center and just obscure, I can't cope with obscure rubbish. But stuff that's really in the know, and *some* stuff that's not in the know that is still palatable, for want of a better term —

PAUL: *To do with comics in the general public.*

TAD: Absolutely.

PAUL: *Let's get back, tell me about the Australian scene, about working with these guys?*

TAD: Gary I consider to be one of the best artists that I've worked with, same with Glen. Dave is probably one of the best writers, and he really has a knack of putting books together. It's just a knack that you pick up after doing things for so long. Gary is a craftsman in himself. I'm dying to see his PLANET OF THE APES mini-series.

PAUL: *How do they like dealing with him?*

TAD: Well, from what I understand, they're having a great old time. Glen and Dave have done PUPPET MASTERS and, I've got to be honest, it's the *best* stuff I've seen come out from them, and it's the best adaptation of anything,

So, Tad . . . you're a big Mike Zeck fan. Well, here's a couple of panels from SANDMAN's mini-series.

called Captain America, a dog called Iron Fist."

And if that wasn't enough, here's more pencils by Mike from his rendition of Captain America (#299).

maybe better than the source material.

PAUL: *What was it from, a movie?*

TAD: Yeah, a movie. I've never seen the movie, but from what I understand the comic is far and away *better* than the movie itself.

PAUL: *Now, Gary Chaloner, are you going to work with him at all on DARK NEBULA in the future? Are you going to be working on* any *projects together?*

TAD: Well, I want to put the screws on him to do a GRANDSTANDER solo. Grandstander, for those who are not familiar with DARK NEBULA, is my prime villain. He's a smart ass, he's an asshole, he's a perfect cunt — he's a killer for hire. But everyone loves him to *death*, especially himself! He's a real egotistical shit. I'd *like* Gary to do this short story. I haven't heard back from him yet, but he would be the perfect person to do the story with me.

PAUL: *Now, what I want to get to, do you think you're going to be working with him on any projects for the States, or any of the guys that you're working with right now?*

TAD: Well, at the moment the fellow I have doing the artwork on DARK NEBULA is a chap by the name of **Jason Polus.** Jason is *fantastic!* He's just turned 21 and he's got an *energy* about his artwork that — well, you've seen his stuff —

PAUL: *We'll have some accompanying the piece.*

TAD: Absolutely, that'd be great. The highest compliment you could pay it is how keen you are to *ink* his stuff, and I think that's great. Jason has just got a *fire* about him that is unbelievable. I want to propose DARK NEBULA to some of

"I've sent submissions to Marvel *many* times and I've

the independent companies in the States, to repackage it.

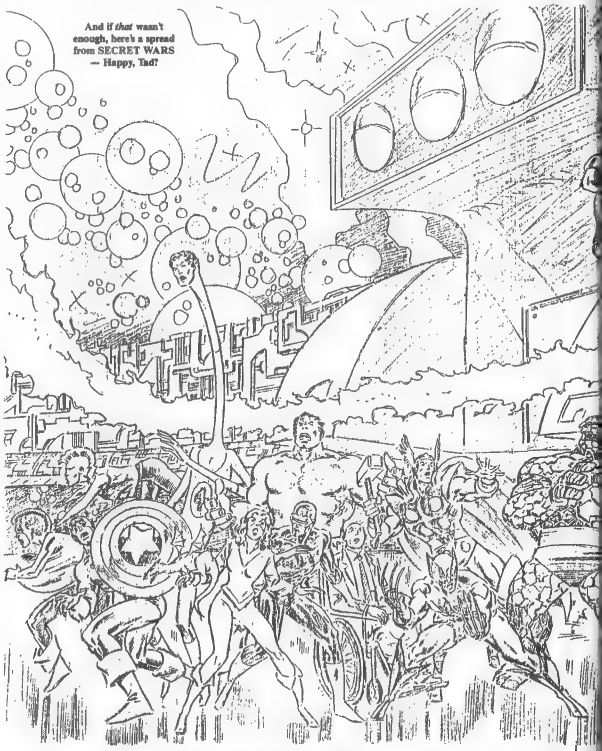
PAUL: *How do you work with these guys?*

TAD: What I do is I put down the plot to a particular story, then I'll break it down into how the story would work page by page —

PAUL: *When you break it down do you do little roughs? How do you break it down?*

TAD: I break it down by words. I sort of break it down in such a way that it can be segmented, and then I let the artist use his own style to maybe *change* that if he

And if *that* wasn't enough, here's a spread from SECRET WARS — Happy, Tad?



followed all the rules. Not once have I received a reply."

wants to. He might think this particular page looks like a square peg in a round hole and change something, and that's *great*. I encourage them to throw their own perspective into it because I *love* seeing my story looking *different* from how I envisioned it. It's a whole new perspective on things, and that's important.

That's how I think a creative team should work, by really sort of bouncing off each other. When **Glen Lumsden** and I were doing the earlier issues of DARK NEBULA he kept *challenging* me with his artwork, and I'd look at the pictures and say, "Well, I could turn in a pretty ordinary script on this or I could give some shit hot dialogue to couple this artwork."

PAUL: *So, you work the Marvel Way.*

TAD: That's right, yeah.

PAUL: *But you do write out a fairly comprehensive plot.*

TAD: Yes, absolutely, all the chess pieces get moved around all the different ways and they live happily ever after in the end. Then he puts that to pictures and I put the words to it.

PAUL: *Do you see yourself working in the States in American comics?*

TAD: I'd like to. At the moment —

PAUL: *Who have you approached?*

TAD: Really, I must admit — this is something else — I've sent submissions to Marvel *many* times, and I've followed all of the rules that have been outlined in the different letters columns, and not once have I ever received a reply. So, at this point, much as I've got *plenty* of stories that I'd like to pitch at Marvel, they've never replied to me in the past so I think I'll be inclined to go elsewhere.

PAUL: *Now, you publish your magazine. You are the publisher.*

TAD: That's right.

PAUL: *How tough is it?*

TAD: Well, it's as tough as making sure that the printers get it right, the distributor does the right thing by you, if you say you want something done that gets followed. There were a lot of teething problems and a lot of fights, a lot of ulcer-building arguments, but in the end it's worked out pretty neat.

PAUL: *Tad, what I really want to get at now is how is Dark Nebula different from American super-heroes?*

TAD: I suppose it's because I try and make him as true to life as possible. I like it to seem like they're real people. I don't like it to seem like all this phony baloney bullshit dialogue that a lot of people think *has* to be in there because this is a comic medium and it *has* to appeal to this sort of market.

PAUL: *You mean like Roy Thomas's dialogue, very stilted?*

TAD: Exactly, exactly. Now, mind you, I *like* a lot of his stuff *for* that particular market, but I don't like to script like that, not for DARK NEBULA. DARK NEBULA comes from the gut and my gut instinct says if someone drops a brick on

"If you're creative and you want to do something there's

your foot and you're in pain you're going to say "Shit!" So I like to translate that into the comic book so that . . . people speak their minds.

PAUL: *What you're saying is DARK NEBULA speaks with an Australian attitude and accent.*

TAD: Exactly.

PAUL: *What are his powers, exactly?*

Yet another of Tad's more treasured characters — Spidey! Here's a layout and finished pencils to the cover of issue #343, by Erik Larsen.

nothing worse than saying 'Gee, I *wish* I'd done that."

TAD: Okay, his powers, as we discussed he's got this alien living in his subconscious, and he has telekinesis and telepathy powers. Well, that situation gets dealt with in a very *definite* sense. But the other aspect of his powers is . . . his powers are the doorway to the beyond, and it's something that has never *ever* been dealt with in comics — I don't think it's ever been dealt with anywhere.

PAUL: *Is he a bit like Dr. Strange?*

TAD: It goes beyond that, it's not actually magic. It's a source of energy that exists that no one has ever considered. When you think about it, our bodies are motivated by a certain energy, I suppose the "life force." Now, when we die where does that go? If you know the laws of conservation of energy, energy can never be destroyed. It can be transferred from one source to another, so you have reincarnation and things like that.

Now, imagine this energy being stored somewhere and someone being able to tap into that, that's where Dark Nebula's powers come from. He generates a fraction of it through what's called Dark Fire, which is just a little expression of it. But he's virtually capable of doing *anything*. His only real restriction in what he can do —

PAUL: *So he has super strength, he flies, he reads minds —*

TAD: That's right, yeah. The limitation of his powers is what he believes he's capable of doing; if he believes he's not capable of doing something then he can't do it.

PAUL: *Now, how would you want to do comics after you saw all the hassles I went through doing PROFESSOR OM?*

TAD: I'm crazy. *(Laughter.)* That's the bottom line. Honestly, I just love comics, simple as that. I think if you're creative and you *want* to do something, there's nothing worse in life than saying, "Gee, I *wish* I'd done that." I'd rather say, "Gee, I'm *glad* I did that." That's really what it comes down to.

PAUL: *Has it been stressful publishing the comic book? Has it been hard on your marriage?*

TAD: Well, it's had its moments. Tempers flare and things get said, but my wife understands, and she knows full well that I'm always there to support her in everything she does. I've never ever told her she can't do anything. She says she wants to do something, I say go for it, do it. Say, for argument's sake, she wants to go over to England to visit some relatives, I say go for it!

PAUL: *But has it caused a financial strain?*

TAD: Yeah, there was a financial strain for awhile, but I was able to sort that out in time and we're back on the right direction. And she's probably

And from the past, SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #4 to be exact, a rare pencil page by Gil Kane.

"There's more to Australia than Crocodile Dundee."

PAGE No.
EAST MEETS WEST
OKAY YOU BIG MUG I'VE CAN DO THIS THE EASY OR THE HARD WAY... WHAT DO YOU SAY EH!?!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING?!?
THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK YOU KNOW PROFESSOR.
YEAH I KNOW AND ROCKY DOES AS WELL HE'S JUST PLAYING THE SCENE OUT! HE'S SUCH A HAM!!
ZING
EAST MEETS WEST © 1992 Paul Power

Pencil panel by Paul Power, our interviewer and a fellow Australian. Art from his ongoing series EAST MEETS WEST.

my greatest supporter and one of DARK NEBULA's biggest fans. She's a very lovely lady, too, which is why I married her.

PAUL: *Now, you are taking a break from DARK NEBULA in part because there was a bit of stress on the relationship.*

TAD: That was mainly due to the fact that I was unfairly sacked from a position I had previously at a different radio station, and it all compounded itself. The bottom line was we found we had more time for other things and less time for each other, so we just stopped at one point and said we need more time together. I'm still working on DARK NEBULA, in fact we're working on a SOUTHERN SQUADRON/DARK NEBULA crossover with **David DeVries**.

PAUL: *So, what's next for you, Tad?*

TAD: Well, I'd like to stay in radio but also do comics for the Yanks, hopefully express Australia attitudes *properly* through an American comic, rather than an American's impression of how Australians should be. The perfect example is the SUICIDE SQUAD story that **Dave DeVries** cowrote with **John Ostrander,** the Captain Boomerang story. Who better than an Aussie to write an Aussie? There's a lot more to Australia than CROCODILE DUNDEE, and the bottom line is who better to write an Aussie *than* an Aussie. Listen, mate, let's go on to something more important. I'm thirsty, let's go for a beer.

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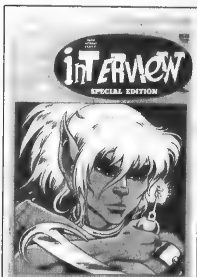
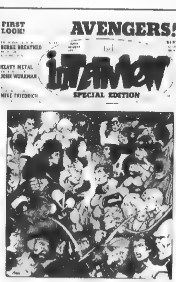


ELFQUEST. A pow-wow with the Pinis on Elfquest, the creation of an elfin world. John Costanza, letterer, tells all of being an artist. Stan Lee goes Hollywood, and the beginning of a legend now the Comico bunch, on their dreams and schemes for the future. Pini cover.



JLA-AVENGERS. George Perez and Roy Thomas tell all about a project that never saw print. Perez's never printed art, only available here! Also John Workman on Heavy Metal, Berke Breathed on Bloom County, Mike Friedrich on the biz end. Perez cover.

JUDGE DREDD VS BATMAN. Brian Bolland spills the beans on this project, first time round. Am Saba saddles Neil the Horse. Don and Maggie Thompson give an inside view of the Comics Buyer's Guide. Bolland cover.

ROBOTECH. Carl Macek & Neil Vokes - from TV to comics - tell why Robotech's a hit. Phil Foglio - Hugo Award winning Sci-Fi artist mumbles about Myth-Adventures, and Cat Yronwode on art for art sake and comics for comics sake. More. Vokes & Rankin cover.

TEENAGE NINJA MUTANT TURTLES Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird give it up. How Turtles Mania began...(look where it went..) Stan Drake on the colorful career of his girls, Kelly Green and Blondie. Peter B. Gillis on censorship, comedy & death! Eastman & Laird cover.

DARK KNIGHT. Frank Miller expounds on his magnum opus. Fred Finger, on his father, Bill. Bob Kane, on the last 50 yrs since Bat birth. Jerry Robinson, on past memories. Burt Ward on the trouble with tights, and George Roussos on the early days. Miller cover.

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DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S
COMICS INTERVIEW
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Will YOUR favorite comics be BANNED ?

SEX & VIOLENCE IN COMICS. Frank Miller, John Byrne, Jerry Parles together with Ron Turner all expound on the limits and far-reaching effects of laws and perceptions. Plus an open forum from the star-studded Chicago trade show on the censorship theme

WOLVERINE. Marvel's mutant mastermind. Bob Harras on launching Logan's solo series John Buscema on drawing savage superheroes. Plus Al Williamson, illustrator extraordinaire . Original Buscema/Jenson WOLVERINE cover never printed on any of Marvel's books.

LONE WOLF. Frank Miller speaks his mind. Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, creators of a Japanese legend, in a talk from Tokyo. Plus First Comics crew Rick Obadiah, Kurt Goldzung, Alex Wald, Paul Guinan, Willie Schubert and Rick Oliver Kojima cover.

ALIENS. Mark Nelson and Mark Verheiden point out the positive and negative problems of dealing with Aliens. Mike Richardson and Randy Stradley on directing a Dark Horse, and managing freelance talent. Nelson cover.

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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

FULL FOR THOUGHT

Beasts,

Steven Tice axed about **Cult** lyrics in #102. If you look at most albums you'll find the music publisher listed. In BOC's case, it's B.O'Cult Music (ASCAP). These are the folks who publish those little booklets that have the music and words — usually piano breakdowns with guitar chords printed above — for just about every album. I didn't find that credit on IMAGINOS, but I'll bet it's available. Check yer local music store (the kind that sells instruments). If they don't have it they can probably order it. If no music store nearby, write to the record company, or to Manny's Music on 46th Street in NYC (or is it 49th?). These things run from $3 to $10, maybe more nowadays. See — my flirtation with the guitar learned me something.

I have finally "discovered" IMAGINOS. When I first got it on your instigation, DAK, I listened a few times and thot, well, an okay album, but nothing to write home about. But, as you know, sometimes albums get better after sitting on a shelf for awhile. I've been listening to it and like it quite a bit — tho I still don't rank it up there with the "**Cult** Classics" of years past. (But I like the New Hampshire references!)

Can you picture **Kim Thompsonish** beasts reading this and saying, "They discuss that shit as though it was actual *music!* Those morons!" Do you remember, the pinnacle of such beasts' ultra snobbery? It was when **Carter Scholtz,** nose-in-the-air elitist Marxist extraordinaire, opined that the development of recording equipment was a detriment to society. He described how he and his friends would get together of an evening and read a score of a symphony. Tut hut! Anything less than listening to the Philharmonic *live* was a bastardization. I don't know what he thot the implications of that for the proletariat were supposed to be. I guess top-line orchestrae (note cheese-eater spelling) were supposed to hit the road to the backwaters and play for free. Even THE COMICS JOURNAL couldn't stomach such high-falutin' pseudo-intellectualisation and **Scholtz** was given a secret tribunal and sent to the gulag. Where, incidentally, he "wrote" a "science-fiction" "novel" called . . . lemme see . . . damn, I can't remember. Anyway, the only review of it I ever saw condemned it as prolix showing off and high-flown flummery or somesuch. PALIMPSEST, or something like that. As **Mencken** said about a **Groth/Smith/Scholtz** hero, **Thorstein Veblin,** "a veritable fountain of pish-posh."

Here's my record recommendation. Predictably, it's the new **Dire Straits** album, ON EVERY STREET. After years of no records, they've reformed. (Ha! Sounds like they were in prison.) Actually, I don't expect you to like it. It's sort of mellow and bluesy, with a touch of country. Also with the obligatory anti-war, anti-Thatcher song, a low point. *But,* the guitar playing and sheer virtuosity of the music is what grabs me. I recommend it for two songs. One is called "Heavy Fuel," and if you remember when we used to talk about "fuel" (*a la* the fuel it took to write "When The Cows Came Home") you'll know what the title's in reference to. The first line is, "Last time I was sober, man I felt bad . . ." The other song is called "My Parties." It is the result of **Mark Knopfler** hanging around with the **Randy Newman** beast, king of sarcastic songs. I've always liked the sardonic/satirical stuff, like RN's "Short People," "Political Science," "Rednecks," and the *best song* of that genre, "My Life Is Good." Of course, Randy has written his share of sappy stuff, too.

Anyway, "My Parties:" It's about a smug guy showing off his house at a party he's throwing. No big deal, but done brilliantly. You both identify and sneer at the guy:

> Now, don't talk to me about the polar bear
> Don't talk to me about the ozone layer
> Ain't so much of anything these days, not even the air
> They're running out of rhinos — what do I care?
> Let's hear it for the dolphins. Let's hear it for the trees
> Ain't runnin' out of nothin' in my deep freeze.

Brilliant, right? Well, you have to imagine it in a condescendin' **Kim Thompson**esque voice.

Y'know, I don't think Kim's a bad fellow — he just got mixed up with the wrong crowd. I've seen it happen. My only enduring memory of Kim was when he came up to my apartment once to interview me for that wretched AMAZING HEROES issue I did the cover for. He acted nervous and was sweating. I thought maybe he was scared because he realized how close to Harlem we were, but that's a wild surmise. For all I know he was headed to the South Bronx for Soul Food. Anyway, he refused a beer, and at the end he pressed into my hands a Fantagraphix book he had edited — THE SURVIVORS: "The Eyes That Burned" by **Hermann.** A rather run-of-the-mill post-Apocalypse "science-fiction" story featuring imitation **Moebius** art. This was presented as the coming thing in comics, etc. etc. Real quality. Not a total piece of shit, but only a hairsbreadth better than those despised X-MEN, and overpriced to boot. $4.95 for 48 pp. and this in 1983 bucks. Oh well, I'm getting too picky. That's SKULL & BONES price, but of course, S&B is a better book.

Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you — the whole climax of this ish was that there was this *mutant,* see, and he could emit destructive heat beams!!! *From his eyes!!!* Wow! Pretty mature, huh?

How the sands do shift.

Now — **cat yronwode.** CAT!!! Lissen — you take things, especially yourself, too damn seriously. This top 100 thing is just a sales gimmick (which, by the way, I didn't find all that interesting, and I didn't agree with the listings. For instance, I see the logic behind **Tim Burton,** but it's like giving credit to the wayward breeze or the force of gravity. But, if I survive, more on that and the qualities of power) or, another way to look at it is, *It's only a different lens, another angle from which to grok the industry!!!* Talk about missing the point! Why not just say, "I'm not interested in the comics industry; let's talk about roses in the most pretentious way imaginable!"

The thing that bothers me about her "analysis" and that of most lefties talking about business is that they think power for a capitalist is the ability to fire people. Do they think that CEOs are thinking *anything* about the workers on the

assembly line, or even the lower line execs that they have "power" over? Shit no! Power in business is the power to *do* things — build and *sell* things. The exulted worker is the most easily replaced, and thus the least important component of production. Also usually the biggest pain in the ass. What, CAT, would power be, by your lights, in a totally automated industry?

See, my problem with power, as you (davebeast) discuss it in CI is that the power to affect things in comics, say, is only good to the extent that it is actually exercised. And when it is, the result is often unpredictable — and what good is unpredictable power? If executive "S" oversteps his bounds and tries to wrest the washroom key from executive "G" by inventing a whole new "Universe" and foisting it on the public, why, it may succeed and thus exec "S" can be said to have great power, or it can backfire and exec "S" can be said to be occupying a place in the unemployment line. But if exec "S" chooses *not* to exercise power at all, then it slips away to executives "X", "Y" & "Z" who, what the hell, might as well risk it, *do* choose to exercise it. Thus "power" is in a constant state of flux. Also, it depends on your point of view. If a mad scientist comes along and invents a new kind of entertainment, say computer "worlds" that you can enter and actually *be* a superhero instead of reading about them, and that obliterates the comics industry, why then all those comics executives didn't really have any power at all in the end, did they — and the mad scientist has the most power of all — and no one even heard of him.

Some of this is over-fueled facetiousness, I know, but having just been reading lots of in-depth history of the KGB, all other discussion of power pales. KGB chairmen in **Stalin's** day had ultimate power of life and death over millions, yet seldom lasted more than a year or two themselves. Remember what **Stan Lee** used to say. "No matter how strong you are, there's always somebody stronger." Not true, of course.

Oh yeah — point about **Tim Burton** is the same as the mad scientist. If tomorrow **F.F. Coppola** decides to make a movie of SKULL & BONES, and it's a big hit, then suddenly *he* has more power than **Burton**, who has by then abandoned comics (chosen not to exercise his power) to do **Danielle Steele** romance movies. So yer forced to claim movie directors/producers as a class. But if you're gonna pick a *class* of people, then #1 *has* to be the consumer or the market, no?

And by the way, if CAT thinks she's immune to this stuff let me see her buck the *distributors!!!* They'll fire her lowercase ass quicker than you can piss on a hybrid rose bush. And how disingenuous, how cute to have a letter from her and one from **Dean Mullaney** on the same subject. As if they were distinct and separate people!

Well, Beasts, I'm running out of vitriol™ — that's what happens when you turn 40 and mellow out.

Edward J. Hannigan
Westmoreland, NH 03476

LO! THE LYRICS!

Dear Mr. Krafi,

I picked up COMICS INTERVIEW #102 today to read the **John Byrne** interview. I was quite thrilled to come to the letters page and see a picture of my musical hero, **Eric Bloom** of **Blue Oyster Cult!**

You and **Steven Tice,** who wrote in looking for IMAGINOS lyrics, will be pleased to know that **Bolle** and **Meine Gregman,** keepers of the BOC flame and leaders of the BOC Fan Club, will be publishing a complete **Blue Oyster Cult** lyric book some time next year. They currently produce a very professional quarterly magazine for the fan club called MORNING FINAL.

A subscription to MORNING FINAL is only $15. Interested Cultists should write to:

The Blue Oyster Cult Fan Club
1610 N. Martel #8
W. Hollywood, CA 90046

We'd greatly appreciate a mention in your magazine!

Look for a new CD and video of a 1976 concert by **Blue Oyster Cult** to be released in January!

Thanks for a fine issue.

Rob Reich
51770-Y Comanche
Fort Hood, TX 76544

INTERVIEW welcomes your thoughts and comments in the Last Word. Send your correspondence to: DAK, COMICS INTERVIEW, 234 Fifth Ave., Suite 301, New York, NY 10001, or fax your letter to (404) 782-6625. Please include your name and address.

INTERVIEW reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

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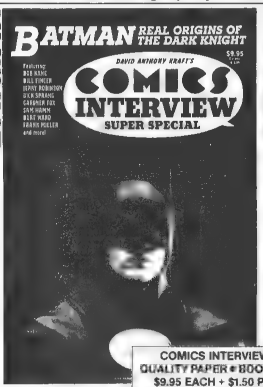

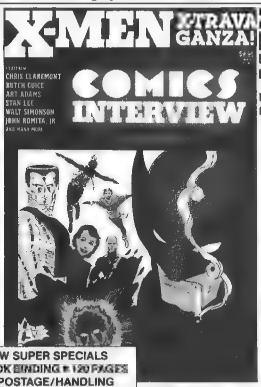

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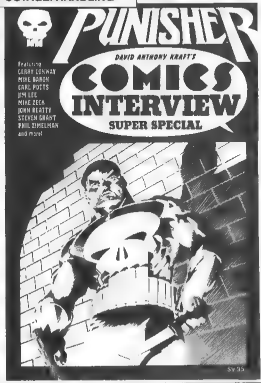

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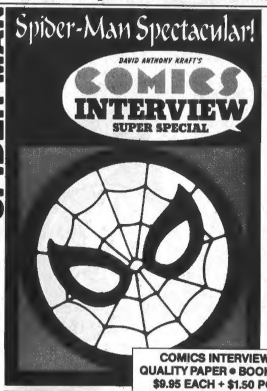

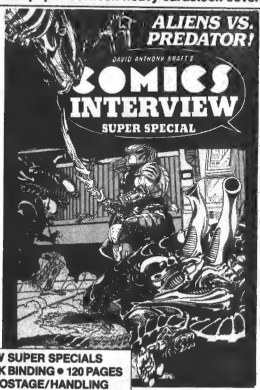

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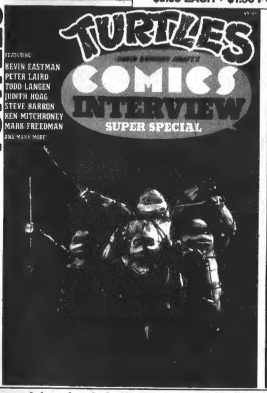

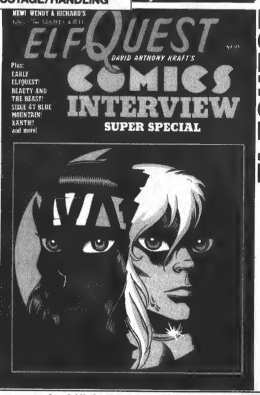

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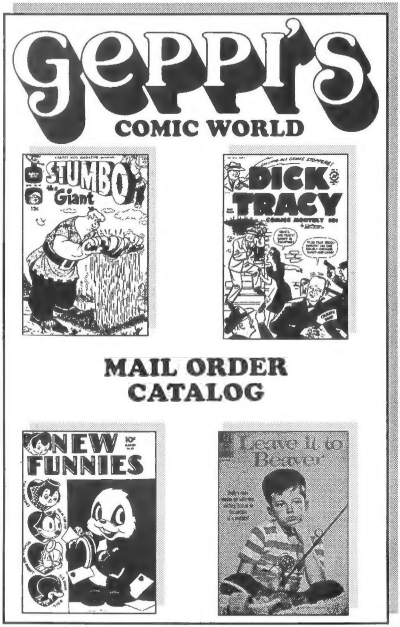

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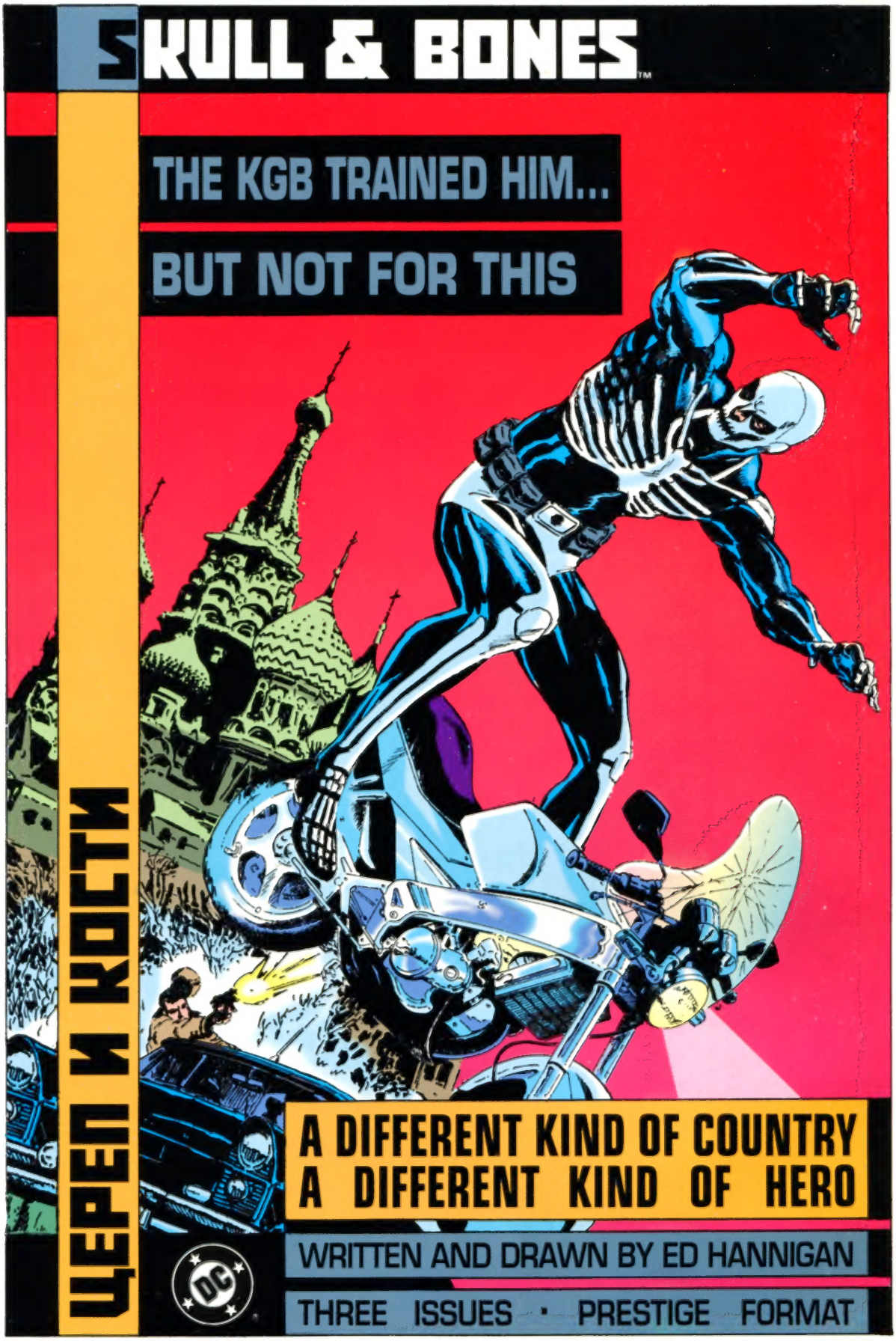
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